

A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name

[Based Entirely on Goswami Tulsidas' Classical Books: Ram Charit Manas, Geetawali, Kavitaawali, Barvai Ramayan, Vinai Patrika, Dohawali & Ram Tapini Upanishad, Anand Ramayan, Padma Puran, Skanda Puran, and other sources for Hymns / Strotas]

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(ii) For the other versions of the story of Ramayan, i.e. Geetawali, Kavitaawali and Barvai Ramayan, the pattern that is followed is to first write the number of the Kand, and then the number of the verse in that Kand. For instance, '1/20' of Geetawali would mean Kand no. 1, which is the Baal Kand, and its verse no. 20.

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

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PREFACE

राम कथा मंदाकिनी चित्रकूट चित चारु ।
तुलसी सुभग सनेह बन सिय रघुबीर बिहारु ॥

Tulsidas says that the story of Sri Ram is like the river Mandakinsi, the pure and clean mind is like Chitrakoot, and love and affection (towards the Lord) is the beautiful forest wherein reside (or move about, wander) Sri Ram. [Dohawali, verse no.195]

Whenever demonic and evil forces became ascendant in this world, whenever Dharma and Satya (the laws and principles governing righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety as well as truth and honesty) are drowned in the surging waves of A-Dharma and A-Satya (the opposite of these grand virtues), and whenever his pious and devoted subjects are tormented by their enemies, the Supreme Lord of creation comes down himself to make the record straight and restore law and order. It is just like an Emperor going to the frontier regions personally to oversee restoration of tranquility, law and order and instill confidence in the subjects of his empire if some cruel and savage enemy begins to disturb the peace and stability in the far-flung corner of the empire. It's part of the divine duty of the Emperor to look after the welfare of the empire. If this is the responsibility of a human Emperor, naturally it is all the more so for the Emperor of the entire creation.

Thus, when the demons unleashed terror in this world, killing and plundering at will, when they could not be reined in by the lesser Gods, and when mother Earth along with the sages and saints approached the Supreme Lord seeking protection and shelter, the Lord promised to tackle the matter personally, and the benevolent Lord did not bother about the problems that such intervention would cause to him and took the extreme and unusual step of becoming a human being himself. Our story relates to one such manifestation of the Lord as 'Ram'. His story is well documented in the famous epic known as Ramayan.

Many versions of this epic are available, both in the classical Indian language of Sanskrit as well as in numerous local dialects, each narrating this divine story for the

masses. Some of them are more in the form of historical narratives in the pattern of the Purans, some are classical poetry and drama that can be easily adapted to the theatre, and others are full of spiritual and devotional quotient. Since this story relates not to an ordinary human king but to the Supreme Lord who lived amongst his subjects personally, the greatest benefit that we ordinary mortals hope to derive from it is to read the versions that are rich and pregnant with devotion, metaphysical knowledge and spiritualism. It serves two purposes—on the one hand it tells us the story, and on the other hand it nourishes our spirits and provides us a simple mean to find peace, tranquility and solace for our souls while remembering and loving our Lord who has done so much for us that with the whole ocean as the ink and the whole surface of the earth as the paper we will never be able to write a letter sufficient enough to thank the Lord!

Among the great poets, scholars and devotees of Lord Ram was the saint known as Goswami Tulsidas (1497-1623 A.D.). At the time, Hinduism was undergoing reformation, it was the time of renaissance when the beautiful heart and the succulent nectar of the essential teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Purans were being liberated from the shackles that they had been put down the centuries which had reduced spiritualism, salvation, emancipation and access to the Lord God to mere formalities, rituals and mechanical form of religion. The spirit was being stifled and strangled at the hand of certain limited sections of society, and though God was the matter of personal faith and love, though he lives in everyone's heart and soul, he was made a distant entity affordable to a few privileged ones. This movement of renaissance was called the 'Bhakti Movement' or the movement that laid stress on devotion and love and submission and dedication rather than formalities and rituals.

The succulent nectar and the spiritual philosophy of the ancient texts were encrusted in an outer thick impregnable layer, and the situation was made all the worse because of the language, because all the texts were in classical Sanskrit which was not the language of the masses but restricted to some privileged upper section of society. Tulsidas and his peers had then attempted to un-shackle religion and bring the distant God near each individual's heart and doorstep. Tulsidas was outstanding in this field, and his contribution, by the way of his devotional literature of exceptional beauty and charm, to the mission of spreading love, faith, devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord God as a means of obtaining personal peace and tranquility as well as accessing salvation and emancipation of the soul has remained unparalleled and towering till date.

One of the reasons for the extraordinary success and appeal of Tulsidas' writings is that he wrote with an expert hand as he was a learned Brahmin who had studied literature and grammar during his earlier years. More than that, he was an inspired soul, shall we call an apostle sent by the Lord himself to accomplish some divine task on the Lord's behalf. This is the best answer for his phenomenal success and endearment of his writings for the masses—it was what the Lord God had himself wanted. Mere expertise at the language is not the reason though, because hundreds like him were experts in the language and the grammar but none of them picked up the pen to spread the 'word' amongst the trapped souls, none of them told them that their 'very own Lord' is standing right in front of them and they just need the right amount of love and faith and devotion to experience his presence amongst them selves. This is what Tulsidas exactly did through his writings—he brought the grand spiritual philosophy, the profundity of metaphysics, and the beauty of the scriptures within the reach of the common man.

He realised by the study of the Upanishads and the other scriptures that Lord Ram was the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Brahm, and his name was the only Mantra (divine spiritual formula) that can liberate the soul and provide it with Mukti and Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). In this context it must be emphasized that the Upanishads talk of a 'Tarak Mantra'—which is a Mantra (a group of letters or words or phrases having immense mystical powers) that is 'Tarak', something that takes the soul across the formidable ocean representing the Maya (spiritual delusions associated with the world) that stands between the soul (Atma) and the supreme Soul (Parmatma).

So, instead of spending life as a mendicant and worrying about his own Mukti, he set on the mission of writing on and about the Lord God known by the name of 'Ram'. This helped him to achieve two goals simultaneously—he helped others to find Mukti by reading his beautiful writings, and he helped his own Mukti by constantly, consistently and persistently remembering his Lord each and every single moment of his life.

The people were attracted to his writings in huge droves like never before for the simple reason that he wrote in their own vernacular language, his writings were weaved around the pattern of beautiful ballads which could be easily sung even by the non-educated and the ordinary man in the street, if not as a religious affair than at least for pleasure and enjoyment of its musical melody, and his thought that the Lord God is accessible to all by the simple means of having love, faith and devotion for him instead of getting entangled in the web of elaborate formalities and time consuming rituals made him extremely dear, acceptable and hero for the masses.

As for the Mukti of his own soul, the very method that he adopted—'writing on Ram'—made him completely and totally focused on and deeply submerged in the thoughts of 'Ram' day in and day out. It was a 'Bhajan' and 'Japa' (devotion and repetition of the Lord's name) par excellence because no other thought was allowed to enter his mind and sub-conscious as they were totally taken over, occupied and overwhelmed by 'Ram'. Remember—it was not the age of computers and modern writing technology as the pen, the paper and the eraser. There were no mass-produced printed referral material or books, there were no organized libraries, and there was no assistant to this Bard. If he made a single error, then he must have had to write the whole page again as there was no eraser. He had to weave the entire story and each of his stanzas and verses in his head as there were no computers with hard discs to store something in memory. When we consider such other circumstantial difficulties we realise the phenomenal dimension of his contribution to the Cause of the Lord.

Since Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, the Lord God and the Father of creation, was so dear and close to this pious saint's heart, he chose to spend the rest of his life singing Lord Ram's glory. He realised at the outset that the beautiful story of Lord Ram did not penetrate to the common people, it did not percolate down to the lower strata of society because it was in the classical Sanskrit which was restricted to the upper classes. Besides this, all these versions that were available till his time lacked the devotional quotient and the mass appeal that was expected from this divine story. So Tulsidas wrote in the vernacular Hindi, the language of the masses in the central planes of India. Thus, the epic story of the Ramayan spread like wild fire, endearing it to the general masses who were not educated enough to understand the intricacies of

metaphysics and theology, and who needed something easy, readily accessible and attractive enough to make themselves identify with it.

By and by, the epical writings penned by Tulsidas weaved themselves into the fabric of India's psyche that they became a part and parcel of it. His writings gave a ray of hope to the society embroiled in religious confusions and contradictions. They gave a simple medicine to the ailing soul yearning for peace and tranquility, a soul seeking an easy method for its Mukti.

Amongst all the devotional literature even written in India, the works of Tulsidas dedicated to Lord Ram are immortal and unique not only in their charm and magnificence but also in the intensity of their devotion, the depth of their metaphysical knowledge, and the beauty of their language. Like a bouquet of flowers, Tulsidas presented the story of Lord Ram in many formats—i.e. in different forms of classical poetry composed in different patterns, but the overall intention was the same, and it was to sing the glories of the Lord in more than one ways.

There was definitely some divine hand moving his pen, and though his body was as mortal as the rest of us but the Spirit that got these writings done was not the ordinary. So Tulsidas was a selected Apostle of the Lord to spread the word of His love and devotion by way of his writings and poetry. It is very important to note that all his works are in poetry form, and not in prose. He was therefore 'singing the song of the Lord from the deep recesses of, and in the language of, the heart', much like the Song of Solomon and the Psalms of the Bible, rather than giving a dry and heart-less discourse.

The magnum opus of Tulsidas which made him famous is his epic known as Ram Charit Manas, the version of the Ramayan that is especially appealing to the soul. The eternal magic of this book which will be the foundation of our current book lies not only in a beautiful narrative but more so in the beauty of its melody which is so enchanting that even if someone does not understand a word of what is being said its mere hearing enthalls the soul and keeps it spellbound. Another miracle is that though the pattern adopted in writing the whole book is the same, its verses can be sung in a number of ways by a single singer, and each method is as enchanting as the other. It would require a heart of stone not to weep in ecstasy and love for the Lord, not to have devotion well-up in one's heart, and not to feel the worries of the world melt away upon hearing or reading of this Ramayan.

Tulsidas' works on Lord Ram are the following—Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali, Geetawali, Barvai Ramayan, Vairagya Sandipani, Dohawali, Janki Mangal, Ram Lala Nahachu, Vinai Patrika. Out of these, the first and the last—i.e. the Ram Charit Manas and the Vinai Patrika are the most profound.

While the Ram Charit Manas is on the pattern of a detailed narrative composed in a selected pattern of writing poetry called Chaupai and Dohas, the Vinai Patrika is an epitome of devotion and surrender to the Lord as it contains beautiful prayers of submission and devotion of the greatest spiritual value that are full of emotions that are heart-rendering.

The other books, viz. Kavitawali and Geetawali, as the name itself suggests, are rendering of the epic story of Ramayan in the poetic style of Kavitta and Geet respectively. These being poetry are sung in the form of melodious songs set to specific notes and meters employed in singing classical Indian songs. This proves that Tulsidas

was not merely a great devotee of Lord Ram and a renowned scholar who knew the intricacies of grammar and language well so that he could employ his writing skills to narrate the divine story of his beloved Lord Ram by writing the epic Ram Charit Manas, but also that he was a master at poetry, an expert at music and a fine singer of songs because otherwise it is simply not possible for anyone to compose songs of such exceptional beauty that they remain unmatched till date. The additional bonus we get by reading and singing and narrating Tulsidas' works is that besides enjoying its music and song we are also enjoying their devotional nectar which comes to us for free. Such a heady cocktail of lessons on love, devotion, submission, spiritualism, metaphysics, theology, morality, ethics, Satya (truth) and Dharma (laws of righteousness) made easy and understandable by the masses is rare to find anywhere else.

The Barvai Ramayan is a composition consisting of two line verses, totaling 69 verses in all, and according to the standard format in which all Ramayans are written it has seven Kands or Cantos. They outline the story of the Ramyana and fill in certain gaps that the saint-poet Tulidas felt he needed to fill in his other compositions of Ramayan. Such as for instance in its Baal Kand, verse nos. 1-7 he describes very succinctly the beauty of the child Ram which he did not do in any of the other books.

The Dohawali is a collection of two line verses which are pearls or gems of wisdom and serves as a ready reckoner to guide us in our daily lives as what to do and what not to when faced with a dilemma. The Barvai Ramayan is another book outlining the story of the Ramayan in the poetic style having two line couplets.

The Janki Mangal and the Ram Lala Nahachu are two books describing the marriage of Lord Ram with his divine consort Sita. In this genre falls one other book of Tulsidas—and it is called Parvati Mangal. It narrates the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati, the cosmic Mother. These three books were extremely popular during marriage ceremonies in Indian families and were invariably sung on such auspicious occasions.

We will see in the course of our reading that Tulsidas has fluently used the present tense in his narrative. It gives us the impression that he was actually witnessing the events as they happened. But it must be remembered that the events occurred during Treta Yug which was thousands of years before Tulsidas was even born. The point of the matter is this that the saint had reached such a higher state of transcendental existence that his Spirit could travel back in time and space to that era about which he is writing. Tulsidas was no ordinary poet; he was a blessed soul especially empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill some divine work. He also had had a Darshan (divine sight) of his beloved Lord Ram as well as of Hanuman, another great devotee of the Lord and an incarnate Lord Rudra (Shiva).

When the Lord employed Tulsidas to become a scribe for him it is natural that the Lord must have arranged for necessary instruments for his writings so as to make them sanctified and bear the stamp of authenticity. So, when Tulsidas picked up his pen to write, he was possessed of the Holy Spirit, and the writing was done not by an ordinary man but by the Holy Spirit itself through the body of this particular man named Tulsidas.

When he sat down to pen his writings on Lord Ram and his times, Tulsidas must have closed his eyes in deep meditation, and in this contemplative state of the consciousness he must have actually seen the events unfold before the eyes of his mind and sub-conscious in vivid detail. Naturally therefore, what he wrote was not a wild

fascination and an imagination of a poetic mind but a faithful narration of events that happened long long time ago.

Remember, what we are dealing with in this story is not something related to visible matter and to the material world of things and substances, but to the divine transcendental world of the Holy Spirit, a world that transcends time and space and which is beyond our comprehension. The body is perishable like the world of matter and material things, but the Spirit is imperishable like the wind and the sky. Just as it is not possible for the gross body to go everywhere it likes, the grosser aspect of the mind is not able to fathom the reach of the Spirit. Again, just as it is very easy for the subtle wind to go wherever it wants and the subtler aspect of the same wind in the form of air to be present everywhere without being noticed, the Spirit too is present everywhere at all times. The only difference between an ordinary man and a realised man is that while the former believes only in things that his grosser mind that relates its self to the gross body allows him believe, the latter type of man rises above the mundane and observes everything from the plane of the Spirit, a plane that relates to the transcendental consciousness, and an existence that is not moribund and shackled to this world.

So we must not be skeptic about something simply because we can't understand it or have not experienced it or can't even imagine of. For instance, could any one imagine about the internet and mobile phone say even fifty years back? Even today, if someone goes to some tribal area on the mountain or the hinterland that is still not reached by modern technology and development, and talk with people living there in the jargon of the internet and the mobile telephony, will they understand? But does their not being able to understand mean that the speaker is saying a lie? When the first human voice was transmitted across the wire, or when the first electric bulb created man-made light, or when the first picture was seen on a screen of the television set sitting on a desk—would anyone in some country where this idea had not reached would believe another if he told the former that this happens?

The idea is, Tulsidas actually saw on the events unfold on the canvas of his mind and sub-conscious because he was a realised and an empowered soul, a man who lived in a state of transcendental existence of consciousness. For such souls, nothing is impossible, nothing is too far-fetched, nothing is unattainable if one has the determination and the will.

For the purpose of narration of Lord Ram's divine story and the glory of his divine Name in our present book *A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name*, I shall employ the direct words of this great saint-poet-philosopher-devotee Tulsidas by way of directly quoting him from his books *Ram Charit Manas*, *Kavitawali*, *Geetawali*, *Dohawali*, *Barvai Ramayan*, *Vinai Patrika* etc., while using my own words as minimum as possible, except to explain or clarify some important point or to write a short paragraph to link one idea with the other.

That is, my endeavour is to keep my own interference by way of comments or explanations etc. at the minimum level, and rather present this great eternal story of Lord Ram directly in the words of Goswami Tulsidas.

I shall use the epic *Ram Charit Manas* as the foundation as well as the frame upon which to build the story, and then decorate and embellish the narrative with selected verses from all of the other books of Tulsidas in order to present to the reader a bouquet of beautiful flowers dedicated to Lord Ram. It will not only make this book a colourful

version of the famed epic Ramayan but make available to the world all of the pristine Tulsidas under one single roof—which is a rarity in itself.

The book has selections from all the original Tulsidas texts, and my narration is also done verse-by-verse according to the selected texts, though I have structured the English in such a way that the flow of narration is continuous, and it appears to a reader that it is a seamless narrative of the story or event. Wherever possible—and in the majority of the cases almost always—I have mentioned the number of the stanza and the verse in brackets without breaking or interfering in the flow of the narrative or the beauty of the text.

I have added in the beginning an Introductory Chapter which outlines what the Book is about and the Story of Lord Ram as it has been narrated by Tulsidas.

This is followed by the text of the Book, and it is divided into three major sections.

(i) The first section narrates the ‘story of Lord Ram’s life’ in the style adopted in the Ramayan, i.e. it has Cantos or Chapters patterned on the traditional way the Ramayan is written.

(ii) The second section shall deal with the theme ‘Glory of Lord Ram’s divine Name’, and it shall consist of a wide selection of verses from Tulsidas’ works, such as the Ram Charit Manas, Dohawali, Barvai Ramayan, Kavitawali, Geetawali and Vinai Patrika.

(iii) The third section has three parts. In the first part we have the divine hymns of Lord Ram enshrined in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad which is exclusively dedicated to Lord Ram. The second part had the 108 holy Names of the Lord culled from the Padma Puran. The third section has a selection of eclectic hymns of Lord Ram from diverse sources, such as the Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, many Ashtaks, Skand Puran hymns etc.

It will be interesting to read about the saint who has written these wonderful books on Lord Ram, i.e. Goswami Tulsidas. So his life and works along with his contribution in the field of spreading the message of devotion and love for the Lord as an instrument for finding peace and rest for the soul as well as its liberation and deliverance have been briefly enumerated at the end of the book as appendix no. 1.

At the end of the book a ‘Glossary’ outlining the importance, the significance and many interesting stories related to the many important characters appearing in the story of Ramayan has been added in appendix no. 2.

And one last word. I bow my head in utmost humility to my beloved Ram that he gave me an opportunity to serve him and carry out his divine will by enabling me to write this book. It is hard for me to express the extent of my happiness, and for anyone else to judge it. I will feel that my labour has been compensated if this book kindles devotion, affection and love for the Supreme Being in the hearts of its readers, and gives them peace and tranquility. One must remember that the language of the Soul has no specific boundaries, and the Lord has all the names and forms that one can imagine of in this world. So we can remember and invoke the Lord’s love and grace in any way we like. Reading about his divine deeds and remembering his divine name are one method to bring us close to our Supreme Lord who is the most merciful and benevolent Father of all living beings.

I ask forgiveness from my beloved Lord Ram for all my incompetence and childishness by submitting before Him—‘Oh Lord! I have uttered what I did not

understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know' (Bible, Job 42/2), but 'must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?' (Bible, Numbers 23/12), for 'the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue (when I spoke what I said)' (Bible, 2 Samuel 23/2).

I write these books as a means of my thanksgiving to my Lord—'Oh! Give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples' (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/8). For this purpose, I—'Sing Psalms to Him; talk all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! Seek the Lord and his strength, seek His face everyone. Remember His marvelous works which He has done; His wonders and the judgments of His mouth' (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/8-12).

I wish to once again thank the Lord God of all before signing off—'Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever' (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/34). Amen!

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Introductory

About the book—In this Introductory Chapter we shall read about two things—(i) The basic structure of the book. (ii) And the story of Lord Ram, the incarnation of the Supreme Being as a human, which has come to be known as the epic Ramayana down the centuries.

The Book

Our Book ‘A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of the Lord’s Holy Name’ is a compendium as well as an anthology based on all of the great classical works (books) of one of the best known and respected poet-philosopher-saint of India, known as Goswami Tulsidas. He has written around a dozen books on the theme of Lord Ram and his divinity, and the irony is that he is little known in the world outside of India though his name and works are as popular and revered as the great story and legend of the Lord himself. The probable reason is that he wrote in the vernacular Hindi, especially a dialect known as Avadhi that is restricted to the northern part of India, as compared to other versions of the great legendary story written by poets and bards such as Valmiki and Veda Vyas that are in Sanskrit, a language which is as universal in India as English is in the modern world.

It was not that Tulsidas was unaware of Sanskrit—the fact is that he was an acclaimed scholar of the language of his time, but he realised that to spread the message of the Lord and his divine deeds, the message of love, dedication and devotion for the Lord as well as using the simple means of reciting the Lord’s glorious stories as a way of meditation and contemplation leading to spiritual happiness and emancipation, it was necessary to write in the language of the common man, which was Hindi and Avadhi and not Sanskrit. So he poured out his heart in this language instead of exhibiting his scholarship by writing in Sanskrit, the language of the learned and the scholar.

Another factor is whereas Valmiki’s, and to a lesser extent Veda Vyas’, versions have been translated into English, no such work was ever attempted in a comprehensive way on Tulsidas, thereby restricting his reach even in those parts of India where Hindi is not the spoken language.

Therefore, I had this inspiration to take up this formidable task and present to the world in simple English all the magnificent works of this great devotee of the Supreme Being who incarnated as Lord Ram. I am not writing a novel; I am not inventing anything of my own. I am trying in my humble way to unfold this glorious tradition of telling the divine story of the Supreme Being who manifested himself as Lord Ram to live amongst the humans to help them attain Mukti (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation, salvation) by following the simple path of developing Bhakti (devotion, dedication, love, submission and remembrance) for the Lord by telling, hearing, reading and remaining submerged in the thoughts of the Lord through his stories and divine deeds that he performed amongst them. This approach brings the intractable and abstract form of God

within the reach of the ordinary man, and it helps him to relate better and more effectively to the Divinity for his own spiritual peace, happiness, rest and bliss.

So it is by now clear that I have brought under one roof all the classical works of Tulsidas—a unique and satisfying endeavour, but a very difficult and daunting task. This is because Tulsidas was a prolific writer, and he had written not one, not two but a dozen books on the theme of Lord Ram. It would have been much easier if any one of his books would have been used to weave my own story around, like a novel for the modern man, quoting from this single book at random. Or even taking one single book and extensively explaining it in English. This has surely been done in this series, but it is not the objective at present—for this book is a ‘bouquet of all the great classics of Tulsidas’.

Besides this, my objective was to present to the world the books of Tulsidas as they are, with the minimum of anything from my side. After all, Tulsidas and his works are revered as sacred texts in India, and so is the theme of Lord Ram. I repeat once again here that I am not writing any novel or any historical book—I am simply telling in plain and simple English what the nearest version of the original Tulsidas is. To achieve this aim, I must—and have—included direct quotations from his various books to give authenticity, authority and sanctity in what I say and write. This approach also gives confidence to me as well as the reader that whatever is said in English is as close to the original Tulsidas as is possible in another language which is far different in its grammar and lexicon than the original. Verification and authenticity becomes extremely easy and convenient. This approach adds authority to the book.

Therefore, this objective and approach necessitated that I include direct verses from the original books of Tulsidas and then follow them up with simple rendering in the English language while constructing the structure of my present book.

I am sure now that my esteemed readers have followed the basic idea around which this book is conceived and written, and how it is structured.

Of course, the reader would like to know who Tulsidas was, and therefore this great saint’s brief life-sketch is included at the end of this book as Appendix no. 1

Now, let me tell you more about this Book. [‘Book’—and not ‘book’—because it deals with holy texts that are regarded as sacred in India, and because it tells the story of the Supreme Being in his form as Lord Ram who lives as human amongst us long time ago.]

Our book tells the mystical and mysterious story of Lord Ram, a story that is eclectic, divine, spiritually uplifting, a provider of peace and happiness to the soul, and magnificent and fabulous to hear even in its earthly form. This marvelous story has been told and retold countless number of times ever since language evolved and the human race learnt to speak in intelligible form. It is mystical because it lifts the teller, the reader and the hearer to a spiritual plane from the plane of this humdrum world of material sense objects and a world full of worries and spiritual problems, and it is mysterious because so many variations are there and each claims itself to be the authentic one, the one which tells the true story, that the hearer is left wondering what the truth actually is.

The answer to the various paradoxes and mysteries associated with the Lord’s divine story is not far to find—it is answered expressly and explicitly by the saint Tulsidas himself in his epic and magnum opus called the ‘Ram Charit Manas’, in its Baal Kand, Doha no. 33. It says clearly that the Supreme Being has been revealing himself over and over again in different forms over different cycles of creation and destruction,

called the different Yugas, and each incarnation of the Lord has been sung and remembered by great sages, seers, saints and devotees of the Lord in different ways. All of them are therefore correct. So to doubt one version and treat the other as correct is like saying that the celestial Sun of any given day, say a Monday, is different from that of some other day, say a Tuesday, or any other day of the week or month or year or decade for that matter.

So we see that there are many who have written the divine story of the Supreme Being who had incarnated himself as Lord Ram, the merciful, gracious, benevolent, magnanimous, kind, righteous, law-abiding, immaculate and upright king-emperor of not only the limited area of the kingdom of Ayodhya but also of the entire realm that stretched from corner to corner of the surface of the earth. Again, there is no astonishment in it—remember, Lord Ram was no ordinary king or emperor; he was the Supreme Lord of creation and the world who had taken a human form. As such, it is obvious and natural that his sway and authority extended to every nook and corner of the earth.

In his cosmic form, the Supreme Being is invisible, almighty, all-encompassing and all-pervading, and in this form he is known as Lord Vishnu who rules over the entire universe. When the same Supreme Authority of creation becomes a human being he must play his role to perfection, because he is perfect in whatever he does. Therefore, as a human being the Lord exhibits some of the typical characteristics of a human being—such as taking a birth as a child, growing up while playing around like any other human child, taking education, getting married, and then going through the turmoil of life like the rest of us. But that does not alter the fact that he is the Supreme Being just like an actor playing to perfection the role that is assigned to him while he acts on the stage of a theatre company.

So we have seen above how and why there exist myriad versions of the divine story of the Supreme Lord's revelation in this world, as well as the many narrators of the same divine story.

In this age of fast pace of life and lack of proper spiritual guidance, it is difficult, if not impossible, to attain spiritual contentedness, bliss and happiness, and the ultimate goal of finding oneness of the individual soul with the supreme Soul of creation, which the scriptures call successful culmination of Yoga (literally meaning a union). So the easier method is to hear, tell and read about the Supreme Lord and the mystical divine deeds that he did during his incarnation as Lord Ram. Story is more appealing to the mind and the heart than dry metaphysical philosophy of the scriptures. Another point is that the stories of the Supreme Lord in his human incarnation are easy to understand and relate to, and the examples of virtuousness and righteousness set by the Lord himself during his earthly sojourn are easy to emulate and site as bench marks. This serves us in good stead because it helps us to improve our lives, become a worthy human being, develop the virtues of holiness and divinity in our own selves, and overcome our inherent weaknesses and shortcomings. If this is accomplished then surely the individual's soul has elevated its self the stature that is equivalent to the Supreme Soul because there is basically and fundamentally no difference between the two.

In other words, a single method of regular listening, telling and/or reading the stories associated with the incarnation of the Supreme Being as Lord Ram bestows upon an individual the same benefit that is got by doing so many other forms of religious

activities, observing so many other sacraments, and undertaking so many types of arduous steps to obtain spiritual peace and tranquility.

Now, for the purpose of the telling of this magnificent, great and divine story of the Supreme Lord who had revealed himself as Lord Ram, all the great devotional literary works (books) dedicated to Lord Ram written by a famous saint of India known as Goswami Tulsidas have been selected by me. Tulsidas was exceptional and unique in this field—because he was an enlightened soul especially empowered by the Holy Spirit of the Lord himself to spread the message of love and devotion for the Lord as a means of attaining spiritual purity, peace and bliss alongside the opportunity of attaining emancipation and salvation for the soul. Tulsidas adopted the simplified method of remembering the Lord through the medium of the Lord's deeds in this world. This helped Tulsidas to ever remain submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and to keep his mind focused on the Divinity and away from this deluding world and its entangling spiritual mess. This is what the essence of Yoga is—to remain focused on the 'Truth' and exclude all that is the 'untruth'.

In order to achieve this end, Tulsidas wrote prolifically on the theme of Lord Ram as an incarnation of Divinity, as the Supreme Being living himself in our midst in the form of Lord Ram's holy story!

One great benefit of this approach was that his entire life and time was spent in the form of one huge Yoga, done continuously and unbroken. He did not remain satisfied by writing one book, say the Ram Charit Manas, but wrote three other books to narrate the same story—these are the Kavitawali and the Geetawali. These two books supplemented and complimented the epic story which was narrated in the Ram Charit Manas. There were certain events in the epic life of Lord Ram that the great soul Tulsidas wished to add more colour and vibrancy to, so he decided to mould them in the form of music and song. A song that is sung melodiously is more heart warming and heart touching than mere narration of events no matter how beautifully they have been narrated. So he wrote the Kavitawali and the Geetawali—both these narrate the same story of Lord Ram's life and deeds but in a pattern that is set to different 'Raagas' which are musical notes, metres and tones of classical Indian music. It is practically observed in our day to day life that one can easily recall some song, sing it comfortably and hum its musical tune more easily as compared to reciting some regular text of a classical book.

Still not satisfied, Tulsidas wrote the short composition called the Barvai Ramayan which also has the seven Kands on the pattern of the other Ramayans but is very short and fills in certain gaps that the great poet felt he must fill in.

Another reason for his continuously writing so many versions of the same story of Lord Ram in so many different ways is, as has been reiterated by me, that he used this method as a means of meditation on the Supreme Being in his visible form as Lord Ram, and repeating the Lord's holy name as much as possible by continuously writing on this theme as a means of contemplation and fixing his mind on the Divinity instead of anything related to the physical world of material objects. This was a profound form of Yoga for him as it helped him to establish a communion of his soul with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

Since Tulsidas' books are drenched in the nectar of love and devotion for Lord Ram whom he treats as the Supreme Being incarnate without any trace of doubt and scope for debate, I have involved all his writings when presenting the divine story of

Lord Ram to my esteemed readers in this present book. This gives the reader the great advantage that is available nowhere else—he comes to read all of Tulsidas’ great books simultaneously and at one single place while going through the epic story of Lord Ram.

Therefore, as has been noted in the preface of this book itself and as outlined above, the present book is based on all the excellent books of Tulsidas that deal with the central theme of Lord Ram, and hence our book is a virtual ‘bouquet of all of Tulsidas’ great books dedicated to Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, the Supreme Lord of creation’. It brings to the reader under one roof the legendary story of Lord Ram as described in myriad ways and from different angles by the same poet Tulsidas. Obviously, he felt that he could do better after writing a given verse that described one or the other episode in the life of the Lord, and so he chose to describe the same event in a number of ways like the creator Brahma who was not satisfied with a particular flower of any given botanical family that he made and so went on modifying and renovating continuously to make newer varieties of flowers of the same family.

Our book is divided into three sections. *Section no. 1* tells the story of the Supreme Being in his incarnation as Lord Ram. *Section no. 2* tells us about the divinity and the glory of the Lord in the words of Goswami Tulsidas by quoting from his different books. And then finally *Section no. 3* presents to the reader some of the eclectic divine Mantras and Stotras—or hymns and prayers—dedicated to Lord Ram that are selected from different scriptural sources.

Thus, the uniqueness of this book is that it will not only tell its reader the divine story of Lord Ram as universally narrated in the epic that is renowned the world over as the ‘Ramayana’ but make it an unique experience for him because it focuses on the writings of the great saint Tulsidas. Besides this story-telling, this book brings under its roof the different Hymns dedicated to Lord Ram as the personified Supreme Being himself.

The present book ‘A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name’ is divided into three sections—1, 2 and 3.

Section no. 1 = The outline of the story of Lord Ram as narrated in our present book is built around the epic Ram Charit Manas—which literally means ‘a symbolic lake consisting of the divine and glorious worldly deeds of Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, which is conceived in the mind and the heart’. Well, the story was conceived in the heart and the mind of Lord Shiva, the most enlightened of all the Gods and an ascetic par-excellence. Shiva knows the secret of who Ram was and therefore he remains perpetually submerged in the thoughts of the Lord, and meditates constantly on the Lord’s divine form and holy name. So obviously he is the best source to reveal the story. Shiva told the story to his divine consort Parvati first (Ram Charit Manas, Baak Kand, Doha 30, Chaupai no. 3), and then later on to Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow (ditto, Chaupai no. 4). Kaagbhusund told this divine story to sage Yagyawalkya who narrated it to sage Bharadwaj (ditto, Chaupai no. 5). The same story was retold by the Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) of saint Tulsidas (Baal Kand, Doha no. 30 Ka). It is this story of the Supreme Being who became a human for the benefit of the earth, the sages and saints, his devotees, and the rest of the world at large that we will be narrating and reading in our present book.

Other books of Tulsidas that have been selected for telling the divine and epic story of Lord Ram are the following—Kavitawali, Geetawali, Barvai Ramayan,

Dohawali and Vinai Patrika. The first two works are based on different 'Raagas' or notes, metres and tunes of classical music of India, therefore they are meant to be sung in the form of melodious songs. The Dohawali is a collection of two-line verses which are brief, succinct and to the point instead of being elaborate. The Vinai Patrika is a book of prayers in the form of a petition that Tulsidas wrote to his beloved Lord Ram, pleading the Lord to take care of him and his emancipation and salvation.

Chapter no. 1 presents the outline of the divine story as has been narrated by Tulsidas himself in the Ram Charit Manas in its Uttar Kand in the form of a dialogue between sage Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, and Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu who is the cosmic form of the Supreme Being. This conversation is included as Chapter no. 1 of our book as 'Kaagbhusund Ramayan'. It will help the reader to become aware of the framework around which the entire story is built, and therefore help him to follow the events as they unfold the coming pages.

Chapter no. 2 describes the genesis of the story as narrated by Tulsidas. It outlines the immediate cause for the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu to incarnate himself as Lord Ram. Then it goes on to narrate the havoc caused by the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka.

Then from Chapter no. 3 to Chapter no. 9 is described the story of the life and times of Lord Ram and the great deeds done by him by quoting directly from the different books of Tulsidas.

Chapter no. 10 is the Lav Kush Kand which describes Sita's second exile and the birth of Lord Ram's two sons.

Chapter no. 11 describes the glorious rein of Lord Ram as the king-emperor of Ayodhya, and Chapter no. 12 outlines the symbolic places where Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, lives for the benefit of his devotees.

Section no. 2 = For describing the greatness and the divinity of Lord Ram as an incarnate Supreme Being, and to highlight the glory of his holy Name, I have selected verses on this theme from all of Tulsidas' books listed above. This section is sub-divided into 5 parts. Part-1 has verses from the epic 'Ram Charit Manas', Part-2 from 'Dohawali', Part-3 from 'Kavitawali', Part-4 from 'Geetawali', and Part-5 from 'Vinai Patrika'.

Section no. 3 = To make the book comprehensive and add diversity to its narration of the divinity, the holiness and the glory of Lord Ram and his divine Name, this section has selection of hymns from scriptural sources *other than* the books of Tulsidas. This adds beauty, flavour and colour to this book and makes it a real bouquet of spiritualism dedicated to the Supreme Being revealed as Lord Ram. To make reading and reference easy, this section is again sub-divided into three parts as follows—

Part-1 has hymns from the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad which lists 47 holy hymns of Lord Ram, Part-2 has 108 divine names of the Lord from the Padma Puran and the Anand Ramayan, and Part-3 has a wide selection of hymns called 'Stotras and Ashtaks' (a hymn consisting of eight four-line verses) that were sung by the Lord's great devotees on different occasions.

Thus, this book will present to the reader a comprehensive picture of the story of Lord Ram, the human incarnation of the Supreme Being, as described by Tulsidas, and at the

same time present to him the way this great saint had narrated the divinity and glory of the Lord and the importance and significance of the Lord's holy Name. Not only this, the reader will come to read many other holy and eclectic Mantras and Strotas (hymns) selected from ancient scriptures especially dedicated to the theme of Lord Ram as being the Supreme Being, the Supreme Lord himself.

The reader would by now be enthused to learn more about who the great saint Tulsidas was. Well, a life-sketch of Goswami Tulsidas is included at the end of this book as Appendix no. 1.

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The Story of Lord Ram in brief

The divine story of the Supreme Being who incarnated on this earth as a human being in the form of Lord Ram is no ordinary story of some great king or emperor. It has a divine element in it; it has the mystical power to provide the listener and the reader with 'Mukti' or liberation and deliverance from this entangling world of delusions and its endless cycle of birth and death along with its interminable horrors. Listening, telling and reading this divine story with concentration and faith is equivalent to meditation and contemplation because the mind and the heart get totally involved and remain engrossed in the details of the fascinating story and its wonderful mysteries as they unfold in all their colour and splendour.

The story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being whose cosmic form is universally known as Lord Vishnu, was conceived in the heart of Lord Shiva. When his divine consort goddess Parvati (pronounced as Paar-vati) requested him to narrate it to her, Shiva revealed this story for the benefit of the rest of the world.

But like the Lord his story is also so full of mysteries. So while we learn that it was revealed by Shiva to Parvati, it is also said that Shiva was quoting the story that was said by the crow saint Kaagbhusund for the benefit of the king of birds known as Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu himself. Come to think of it—Garud is so close to Lord Vishnu but yet he could not know the Lord's story and had to be told by a humble bird such as the crow Kaagbhusund. Therein lies a mystery—no one can be certain who was the first to narrate the divine story of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram.

On this earth, the story was first told by sage Yagyawalkya, one of the greatest of ancient sages who has found renown in the Upanishads as well, and he was extremely erudite and knowledgeable on such matters, to sage Bharadwaj who lived on the banks of the holy river Ganges at its confluence with other two holy rivers, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. This place is known as Prayaag. The occasion was the congregation of holy men at this place during an annual event called Magha, when the sun is in the zodiac sign of Capricorn. It is the eleventh month according to the Hindu calendar, and falls roughly in the months of February and March.

So we have three sources of this story—one is Lord Shiva, the second is Kaagbhusund, and the third is sage Yagyawalkya.

The earth was tormented interminably by the tyrannical and cruel demons. The demons were like the devil and the Satan; they derived pleasure when other suffered. The sages, saints and hermits of the period took the earth, which had transformed itself as a cow, along and went to the abode of the creator known as Brahma in the heaven to ask the latter to do something to save them all. The creator told them that it is beyond his means, and it is only the Supreme Being known as Vishnu who can provide a solution.

But now the question arose where to exactly find Vishnu as he is formless and without any name and specific abode as he is the all-pervading Supreme Lord of creation. It was decided that they should all approach Lord Shiva because he is the wisest God and will be the proper advisor.

When the group approached Lord Shiva and asked him the way the Supreme Lord can be found, Shiva replied that there is nowhere that the Lord is not present. What one needs are devotion, conviction, faith and love. So the sages, hermits, earth and Brahma together prayed to the Lord to help them and protect them. The Supreme Lord Vishnu revealed himself and assured them that he would come down personally on the earth as a human in the form of Lord Ram, and liberate earth from the burden of the cruel demons. The magnificent bonus of this incarnation would be that the many sages and hermits and ascetics who had been doing long penances and had been longing to have a first-hand communion with the Supreme Being would also get an opportunity to fulfill their cherished lifetime desire.

The creator Brahma meanwhile asked all the Gods to reveal themselves as monkeys and bears to help the Lord during his sojourn on the earth to lead his earthly life.

Now some very pertinent question arise—(a) why did the Supreme Being, who is able to do anything by his mere wish, have to become a human when he could have simply killed the demons, the devils and the Satan by merely wishing so, and (b) why did he need the help of the monkeys and bears?

There are many answers to these questions, but here I shall give some of the prominent ones. First, the demon king known as Ravana had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to please the creator and become immortal. When the creator told him that all those who have taken birth must die some or the other day, giving his own example that his life span is also fixed though it is exceptionally long in the term of mortal creatures of the world, and so it is impossible to become immortal, Ravana asked him to grant immunity from death except at the hands of humans and monkeys. This is because he thought that if the Gods and Goddesses who were so powerful would not be able to kill him, what will the frightened and humble man and a monkey do to him. So this was the loop-hole that had to be exploited if Ravana was to be killed.

Second is that the Lord wished to show by his own example that even humans and the humble monkeys can achieve stupendous objectives and do fantastic deeds if they have the will and the determination.

Third, the Lord also wished to show by his example what sort of righteous and morally correct life one should lead, and how to deal with myriad situations that a man faces in his life.

Fourth, he wished to give a message that one should not treat others with contempt because they are low down in the evolutionary ladder, because the Lord himself

loved the monkeys and the bears who had helped him in all possible ways when no human being came forward to do so.

Fifth reason was that he wished to convey a message that if a soul, no matter how exalted and noble, has become a human being or has entered the body of a human being, then he is bound to have some shortcomings and drawbacks and limitations, but the trick is not to let them come in one's way of being scrupulous, righteous, noble, correct, truthful, holy and pious. This is the reason why the Supreme Being acted like an ordinary man and went through all the throes of sufferings, pleasures, pains and elations like any one of them—but still standing tall like a colossus in the human race and remembered for generations after generations while the rest of the race vanished into thin air. Therefore, if one makes a mistake, it is better not to brood and weep over it but to take positive and constructive steps to rectify the mistake and undo the past by changing one's future course of action.

And finally, the sixth reason was that the Lord wished to tell the human race, especially those who were proud of their knowledge, wisdom and expertise in certain fields, that such grand virtues and qualities were not their exclusive domain or prerogative because there were amongst the monkeys and bears such individuals who were matchless in wisdom, knowledge and expertise in technical matters. For instance we have Hanuman whose level of knowledge of the scriptures and language, wisdom, spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation was unmatched in this creation. Then there were the two monkeys who had built the bridge across the ocean, named Nal and Neel, and the old bear king Jamvant who was always consulted in matters that required an old man's experienced feedback.

The story of the Lord's earthly or worldly sojourn is ripe with and full of instances from which one can learn so many practical things, but that is not the subject here to discuss.

So it was that the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu in his cosmic form revealed himself as a human being in the form of Lord Ram. The divine consort of Vishnu became Lord Ram's wife Sita. The close associates of Vishnu became Lord Ram's three brothers named Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan.

In some early time there was a king named Manu and Satrupaa. They had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to worship the Supreme Lord. When the Lord was pleased by their sincerity and commitment, he revealed himself before them. Asked for some boon as a reward, the holy couple desired to have the Lord as their son. So this was the excuse Lord Vishnu found to become their son in his incarnation of Lord Ram in order to kill the demons and free the earth and its inhabitants from the cruelty and tyranny that these devils had been perpetrating.

Manu became king Dasrath, and Satrupaa became his chief queen Kaushalya. The king had two other queens named Kaikeyi and Sumitra. The king had no son though he was very righteous and noble and a diligent follower of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility in thought and conduct) and Satya (truthfulness). So one day he approached his Guru (royal priest and moral preceptor) named sage Vashistha to find a solution to his predicament. The sage advised him to hold a fire sacrifice and make sage Atri as the chief priest for it because this sage was an expert in performing such sacrifices.

The fire sacrifice was successful, and the Fire God appeared from the fire pit with a bowl of sweet pudding. He asked the king to distribute it to his queens, and they will get sons as desired by him. The king was exceedingly pleased, and did as instructed.

So on an auspicious day the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu manifested as the son of Kaushalya who came to be known as Lord Ram. Lord Vishnu's other fractions became the three brothers of Ram, and they were named Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan by sage Vashistha. On the occasion of their birth there was not only a great celebration in the city of Ayodhya, the capital of Dasrath, which lasted for a month but even in the heavens and the rest of the places of the earth where sages and hermits came to hear this wonderful news.

The children grew amid much love and joy. They were taught by the Guru Vashistha. They made their parents, the members of the royal household staff, the citizens of Ayodhya and the Gods in the heaven very happy by their childhood deeds and pranks. The days passed on so happily and enjoyably that no one knew when it was day and when it was night, or which day of the week or month it was.

By and by, the four divine brothers reached their teens. Around this time, another sage named Vishwamitra was being persistently tormented by the demons who would defile his fire sacrifice. The sage decided to bring Lord Ram to get rid of this thorn in the form of demons, because he thought that after all this was the precise reason why the Supreme Being had taken the trouble to become a human.

Sage Vishwamitra came to Ayodhya and requested king Dasrath to send Ram and Laxman with him. The king was initially reluctant because he was worried for the safety of his sons, but his Guru sage Vashistha explained him the reality and assured him that no harm would come to the boys. So Lord Ram and Laxman accompanied sage Vishwamitra and went to his hermitage.

On the way the Lord performed two miraculous deeds—one was to kill the demoness named Tadka who attacked them, and the other was to provide liberation to Ahilya, the chaste wife of sage Gautam, who had been turned into a stone due to some curse. The Lord touched the stone and this touch of his holy feet freed Ahilya of her curse.

It must be noted in this context that all the demons who were killed by the Lord were provided liberation and deliverance from their sinful body. This is because the truthful identity of any individual is not his physical body but his soul known as the Atma. This soul gets trapped in a body due to some reason, and when this body is shed the soul is liberated from its fetters. Usually the body of the demon forced these individual souls to go on committing more and more sins, thereby preventing its liberation and deliverance. But when the Lord killed these demons, their souls invariably found liberation and went to the heaven.

When the demons, led by Marich (pronounced as *Maareech*), attacked the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra the next morning of the Lord's arrival there, he was hit by a headless arrow by the Lord and flung far away into the middle of the ocean.

Then news came that king Janak is holding a marriage ceremony for his daughter named Sita, and in it the condition laid down by the king was that anyone who would lift and string a formidable bow of Lord Shiva that the king had in his possession for safekeeping would become eligible to marry his daughter. Sage Vishwamitra took the two brothers Ram and Laxman and went to attend this ceremony. There, when all the

assembled kings and princes failed to move the bow even an inch, Lord Ram not only lifted and strung the bow but also broke it. This culminated in his marriage with Sita. The other three brothers were also married at the same venue to other sisters and cousins of Sita.

The story thus far is covered in the Baal Kand of the epic Ram Charit Manas or the Ramayana written by saint Tulsidas. The word 'Baal' means a child or an adolescent youth, and the word 'Kand' means an event or an episode or a section of a bigger story.

Then we move on to the next phase in the Lord's earthly life, and it is narrated in the next Kand known as the Ayodhya Kand. It is related to the events in the life of Lord Ram that were centered on the developments in Ayodhya, the capital city of the kingdom.

The king was getting old, and he was eager to anoint Ram on the throne. He approached his Guru sage Vashistha with his wish, and got a green signal from him. Preparation started in Ayodhya for the grand anointment ceremony. But the Lord had come down to earth not to enjoy the life of a prosperous kingdom but to eliminate the demons and free the earth of its burden, as also to give the numerous sages and hermits living in far flung parts of the realm the privilege of his divine view, known as 'Darshan'. So something must be done. The Gods became upset that if the Lord gets the crown then he would not be able to go the forest and fight the demons like an ordinary human, and the very purpose of his incarnation would be nullified. So they devised a stratagem by which the goddess of wisdom known as Saraswati corrupted the mind of Manthara, a maidservant and a close confidante of Kaikeyi, one of the queens of Dasrath and the mother of Bharat.

Manthara became jealous that Ram would become a king, and she instigated Kaikeyi saying that if this happens then she would have to live like an ordinary royal instead of like a queen, and Bharat would have to live like an ordinary courtier, obeying the orders of the king Ram. So what must be done, asked Kaikeyi. Manthara advised her that she had two pending vows or promises with king Dasrath, and she should invoke them now and redeem herself. She must ask the king to appoint Bharat on the throne as a fulfillment of the first promise, and send Ram to the forest for 14 years as the fulfillment of the second promise.

So it happened that the righteous king was trapped. He did not wish to renege on his own promises as this was absolutely sinful and regarded as unethical and sacrilegious for a truthful man who had spent his lifetime upholding the principles of Dharma. So Lord Ram was exiled to the forest for the next 14 years. Though Kaikeyi had asked only Lord Ram be sent to the forest, but when his wife Sita and his brother Laxman came to know about these developments they also decided to accompany him.

Lord Ram left the city on foot along with Sita and Laxman. King Dasrath was heart-broken and he wept bitterly as never before. The city was thrown into turmoil, and the condition of the citizens of Ayodhya was no better—they could not bear that their beloved Lord should leave them and so all able bodied left the city to follow the Lord from behind, leaving the city desolate. The king sent his chief minister named Sumantra with a chariot with the intent to take him some way ahead into the forest and somehow make the Lord come back. Sumantra managed to persuade the Lord to board the chariot, but the citizens followed relentlessly. The first day's stop was on the banks of river Tamsa.

The Lord did not wish that the citizens should be subjected to more suffering, and so he asked Sumantra to drive away in the darkness of the night in such a way that the tracks got confused and obliterated so the citizens would not be able to follow them the next morning when they woke up. So the Lord went ahead on his forest exile, and the dismayed citizens had no choice but to return home.

From there they went on the chariot to Sringeripur and met Nishad, the chief of the boatman community. The next morning, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman shed whatever remnants of royal paraphernalia they still had, matted their hairs, and summoned the boatman to cross the river Ganges. Sumantra had to turn back to Ayodhya from here.

From there the Lord went to Prayag, the holy confluence of the three holy rivers, i.e. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, and visited the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj.

From the sage's hermitage the Lord moved ahead on his onward journey to the forest. All the inhabitants of the little villages and hamlets that fell on the way were awe-struck at their sight and felt very privileged that they were having a divine Darshan (view) of the Lord even while staying in their native places. In this way, thousands of ordinary men, women and children had the benefit of viewing the Supreme Lord himself without having to undertake any arduous exercises and visiting any pilgrim places in search of the Lord.

By and by, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman came to the hermitage of sage Valmiki. The sage told the Lord the places he must choose to live in from the spiritual perspective, and then the physical place known as Chitrakoot situated amongst verdant forests, rivers and streams, and green mountains rich with waterfalls, where the Lord should go and live for sometime before moving ahead. So this was the place where the three—Lord Ram, his consort Sita, and his younger brother Laxman—put up a thatched hut and spent some time of the earlier period of their forest exile.

Meanwhile, when Sumantra returned to Ayodhya and informed the king that Ram, Sita and Laxman did not come back but went on ahead to the forest, the old king died of contrition, grief and shock. The Guru, sage Vashistha, sent a messenger to Bharat and Shatrughan who were at the time of the unfolding of this horrifying saga in Ayodhya at the place of their maternal uncle. When Bharat got the news that he is being urgently summoned, he and his brother immediately came back to their home city. Bharat was met with gloom and foreboding omens around him. Everywhere he glanced, he saw a somber and grave mood. When he reached the palace he learnt what horrible deeds his mother had done—his father Dasrath was dead, and his beloved brothers Ram and Laxman had gone to the forest along with Sita, his sister-in-law.

Obviously, Bharat was dumb-founded and crest fallen. He severely scolded his mother like she was a witch; he caught hold of Manthara by her hairs and dragged and kicked her, and was generally inconsolable. Sage Vashistha did his best to calm him down, and in due course Bharat performed the last rites of his dead father.

But the throne was empty and this was not good for the kingdom. So the Guru, the ministers and the courtiers tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown till the time Lord Ram came back. But Bharat flatly refused. He said that instead he would prefer to go to the forest and bring Ram back. Bharat—who till now was regarded as the villain and perceived as the chief conspirator for plotting for Ram's forest exile as he wished to usurp the crown—suddenly became dear for the masses.

So the royal entourage, accompanied by citizens, army, courtiers, queen Kaushalya, and ministers of the kingdom, started on its journey to the place where Lord Ram lived in the jungle. Bharat and Shatrughan walked on foot, spurning requests to board the chariot. Why, Bharat argued, should he sit comfortably on a chariot when his Lord had walked on foot? Boils developed in the soles of both Bharat and Shatrughan,

Sumantra showed them the path as far as Sringeripur where he had last seen Lord Ram, and then from there the royal party was led by Nishad who took him to the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj. Thereafter, the entourage moved on rapidly, asking the villagers and residents of the hamlets on the way about the directions that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had taken. Messengers were sent to reconnoiter, and Bharat was so nervous that he was uncertain if he would ever meet the Lord again. Eventually they reached Chitrakoot.

The two brothers Ram and Bharat met most affectionately, and so did all of them with each other. The party pitched up camp in the pleasant environs of Chitrakoot. Lord Ram and Laxman did their last rites for their dead father, and some time was spent in rest and chalking out the next strategy. The Guru sage Vashistha summoned a meeting, and Bharat went all out to plead with the Lord to forgive him and return back to Ayodhya. Lord Ram convinced Bharat that he loved him more than he can even imagine and that there is no trace of ill-will or misunderstanding in him. But he must obey the instructions of his late father to stay in the forest for 14 years, and since the father is dead now it becomes all the more mandatory to carry out his orders, for otherwise it would be tantamount to disobeying one's dead father which is an unpardonable sin. Bharat had even gone on record to offer to substitute places and stay in the forest in place of Lord Ram, but the Lord dissuaded him from it. Guru Vashistha then took Bharat aside and explained to him the divine mandate which the Lord had himself pronounced as Lord Vishnu and for which reason the Lord had come all the way down to earth. That divine work of the Gods for the wider well-being of creation and peace of its creature—which was the elimination of the demons—was far more important than suffering the absence of the Lord for such a small period of 14 years which meant nothing in the cosmic scale of time. Vashistha told Bharat that he should see the things from a broader perspective, and give up his stubbornness. Bharat saw the reason, and so he relented. The Lord gave Bharat his wooden sandals as a token of his presence in Ayodhya and its throne.

Accepting it most reverentially, Bharat took his leave and returned to the city with a heavy heart. He put the Lord's sandals on the throne, and himself decided to lead a life of a hermit. So he built a thatched hut on the outskirts of the capital, as a place called Nandigram, and began to live an austere life of a hermit. He carried his duties of the kingdom as a caretaker, and worshipped the sandals as a personified image of Lord Ram himself.

This brings us to the close of 'Ayodhya Kand'.

The next phase of the story is called Aranya Kand because it deals with the part of Lord Ram's life in the forest that was very dense and infested with cruel demons. The word 'Aranya' means a forest.

After sometime, Lord Ram decided to leave Chitrakoot and head further ahead into the denser part of the forest. He had two objectives—first was that great sages, hermits and ascetics lived there and they had all done severe Tapa (penance and austerity). The Lord had to bless them all, and to do this he had to visit their hermitages

in the deep recesses of the forest. The second reason was that he would find the demons there, and not in the inhabited areas where the forest was less dense and not as hostile.

So the Lord went into the next area of the forest and met a number of sages and killed a number of demons. Thus, he met sage Atri, and Sita paid her obeisance to the sage's wife known by the name of Anasuiya. The Lord proceeded further and killed the demon Viraadha. Then he met sage Sharbhanga, and took the vow of killing the demons when he saw a heap of bones and upon enquiry was told that it was of the sages killed by the demons. Moving ahead, the Lord met sage Sutikshan, and then sage Agastya.

Further ahead came the real horrifying part of the forest, called Dandakaaranya. It was most inhospitable and dense. The Lord met Jatayu, the vulture, and befriended him. The Lord decided to spend sometime in a clearing of the forest, and put up a small thatched cottage in a place called 'Panch-vati'.

A demoness named Supernakha became enamoured by the Lord, and disguised as a beauty she approached the Lord with the proposal of marriage. The Lord got her nose and ears chopped off by Laxman. Enraged, the demoness complained to her brother, the demon Khar. He gathered an army of demons led by himself, Dushan and Tirshira, and attacked the Lord. After a fierce battle, all the demons were killed.

Wonderstruck, Supernakha went to complain to the king of demons, i.e. Ravana who ruled the demons from his capital of Lanka which was a golden city situated in the middle of the ocean. Ravana was surprised, as Khar and Dushan were no ordinary demons and they had the strength matched only by himself. So surely their killer cannot be an ordinary human. But their killing was an affront for him, and he just could not take it lying down. But at the same time he did not have the courage to face this human enemy from the front because with the killing of Khar and Dushan he had become suspicious.

So he decided to adopt a stratagem and lure them to his fortress at Lanka. He went to Marich (who had earlier been flung by the Lord when he had gone to defile sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice) and forced him to become a golden deer so that Ravana could steal Sita in order to settle scores with Ram for deforming his sister Supernakha.

As this decoy golden deer frolicked near the hermitage of Lord Ram in Panch-vati, Ravana hid and waited for his chance to pounce upon Sita. The Lord knew everything in advance. So he sent Laxman to the forest to fetch wood and asked Sita to enter the 'fire' to maintain her purity because now approached the crucial moment for which the Lord had come to the forest. When Sita saw the golden deer, she asked the Lord to go and fetch it for her. The all-knowing Lord willingly got up and went deep in the forest behind the deer. Finally when he was far enough so that Ravana could get a chance to carry out his mischief, the Lord killed the deer. At the last moment of his life, Marich called out aloud the name of Laxman first and then softly the name of the Lord, 'Ram', and found his emancipation and salvation.

As was destined, when Sita heard the name of the Laxman being called out, she thought that the Lord was in danger and needed help. And despite of Laxman assuring her that no harm can ever come to the Lord, she forced him to go in the direction from where the name was heard. Finding the hermitage unguarded, Ravana appeared as a mendicant and begged for food. Sita stepped out to oblige him, when he suddenly showed his true form and seized her. Putting her forcibly on the chariot, he went towards Lanka by the air, with a distraught, wailing and lamenting Sita held in captivity. On the way, the vulture Jatayu tried to stop him and a fierce battle raged between the two. But ultimately

Ravana cut off Jatayu's wings, and the poor bird fell on the ground, repeating the Lord's holy name 'Ram' and holding his last breath for some more time so that he can see the Lord and convey the message of Sita's abduction by Ravana before he dies.

Meanwhile, when Ram saw Laxman coming, he was alarmed, and knew that something was seriously amiss. When the two brothers returned to the hermitage, Sita was gone. At first Lord Ram pretended that he has lost all hopes and courage, and wished to end his life. Like an ordinary man he wailed and wept for her. This was part of the human drama that the Lord had to play to perfection so that the demons are not forewarned that the Supreme Being has come to eliminate them. Otherwise they would surrender themselves and the Lord would be forced to forgive them to uphold his reputation of being merciful and kind. But should this happen, the entire trouble of coming to the earth would be of no use, and though the Lord would be compelled to forgive the demons if they come seeking pardon they would revert to their old ways after sometime. The Lord's promise to the earth and the Gods that he would rid the world of the torment from the demons would not be fulfilled. So it was prudent and wise to play safe and let them believe that he was an ordinary human prince sent to the forest due to fight over the share of some kingdom!

Gradually after the initial shock, the Lord regained his composure, and the two brothers now set out in search of Sita. They came to the place where Jatayu lay wounded. The Lord washed his wounds with his own hands and lock of hairs, and Jatayu told him all that he had witnessed. Then Jatayu died while being caressed by the Lord himself. The Lord then performed his last rites himself.

Moving ahead, Lord Ram met and killed a demon named Kabandh. Then he came to the lonely hermitage of the old woman named Shabari. She gave him motherly love and some fruits to eat, and then left her mortal body by the self-lit fire of Yoga to find emancipation and salvation. The Lord performed her last rites as he would have done for his own mother.

Shabari had advised the Lord to proceed in the direction of a mountain known as Rishyamook where lived the exiled monkey king Sugriva with his companions such as Hanuman and Jambavan.

So Lord Ram and Laxman proceeded in the direction of this mountain. This brings us to the end of 'Aranya Kand'.

Next is the 'Kishkindha Kand'—so called because the area of the land fell under the jurisdiction of the kingdom of Kishkindha, which was the kingdom of the monkeys and bears, and had the city of Kishkindha as its capital.

At the Rishyamook mountain, the Lord met his greatest devotee known as Hanuman. By his physical body he was a monkey like the rest of them, but we must not forget here that all of them were the Gods who came down on the earth to help and support Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram when the Lord would launch his final assault on the demons. Hanuman was none but Lord Shiva himself.

Here, the Lord made friends with Sugriva, the exiled brother of Vali, the king of the monkey race. When the Lord learnt about the injustice done to Sugriva by Vali, he interceded on Sugriva's behalf and killed Vali. Then Sugriva was made the king of Kishkindha.

The Lord waited for the rainy season to end, and then huge groups of monkeys and bears were dispatched in all the directions of the earth to find out about Sita. Since

the Lord is all-knowing, he knew before hand that this task would be accomplished by Hanuman alone. So he summoned him and gave his personal finger ring as a token for Sita so that she is convinced of the identity of Hanuman when he met her.

The group in which Hanuman was went in the south direction, and finally they reached the shore of the ocean. Faced with the formidable ocean as an obstacle, the group became distraught and concluded that they have come to a dead-end. It so happened that the elder brother of Jatau, the vulture named Sampati, lived in a cave in a nearby mountain. He came out upon hearing the commotion and told the group that he can see across the stretch of the ocean and see Sita seated under a tree in a garden in Lanka. This city was mid-way in the ocean, and was approximately 100 Yojans (800 miles) from the shore. So obviously anyone who could make this giant leap can go there.

After much deliberation it was decided that the only member of the group who has the ability to go and come back alive was Hanuman. The bear king Jamvant encouraged Hanuman to show his true mettle and do this great task of the Lord for which he has taken birth as a monkey in the first place.

Hanuman immediately assumed a colossus form, and invoking the holy name and the divine blessing of the Supreme Lord Ram, he prepared to leap across the ocean.

This brings us to the end of 'Kishkindha Kand'.

The next phase of the divine story of Lord Ram is known as Sundar Kand. The word 'Sundar' means beautiful. Why this Kand is called 'Sundar' is discussed at the end of its brief outline.

Hanuman leapt across the ocean. He met the demoness named Sursaa who could catch the shadow of anything flying overhead, and overcame her with wit. Then he landed on the shore of Lanka, the capital of the demons that was ruled by their ruthless king Ravana, the one with ten heads. At this time, Hanuman was in a very small form, like that of a mosquito. At the entrance of the city he met Lankini, the demoness gatekeeper, and punched her, leaving her bleeding profusely. She then allowed him to go in, prophesying that the end of the cruel demons was now at hand. Once inside the city, he roamed around in search of Sita and came to the dwelling of Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana but a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Vibhishan and Hanuman met each other, became friends, and the former told the latter the place where Sita was confined. It was a garden known as the Ashoka Vaatika or the garden of Ashoka trees.

Hanuman entered the garden and hid himself behind thick foliage of the tree under which Sita sat brooding and in grief. At the opportune time Hanuman dropped the signet ring of Lord Ram that he had brought along. Sita picked it up, and thus the two—Hanuman and Sita became acquainted with each other. Hanuman reassured Sita that her days of grief were soon to end as the Lord would come as soon as he goes back to him with the news of his meeting with her. Sita was extremely happy and relieved. Then Hanuman took her leave and ruined the garden of its fruit bearing trees. Ravana heard of the destruction and was alarmed, sent his army under the command of his son Meghnaad to catch Hanuman and bring him to the court. Hanuman tried his best to plead with Ravana to avoid confrontation with the Lord and give Sita back to him, but Ravana flatly refused. The ill-witted demons tried to mock at the Lord by deforming his messenger, and so they decided to burn his tail. This was a god-sent opportunity Hanuman was waiting for to settle accounts with the demons, so as soon as the cloth that was wrapped round his tail and soaked in oil was set alight, he escaped from their captivity and went on a

rampage in the city, dragging and swaying the fiercely burning tail behind him. This resulted in a huge fire, and the golden city of Lanka was reduced to ashes. Hanuman jumped into the ocean to douse the flame, took his last leave from Sita and jumped across the ocean to this side of the shore where his other companions waited anxiously for his return.

The party went jubilantly to report the success to Lord Ram, who was overwhelmed with joy and happiness. There was cheer and rejoicing everywhere. A huge army of monkeys and bears was assembled forthwith and the Lord started on for the final phase of his forest exile to conquer Lanka and kill the fierce demons led by Ravana, thereby fulfilling the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the tormented earth, to the worried sages and seers, and to the terrified Gods that he would rid them of their fear and tyranny of the demons.

The army reached the shores of the ocean. The Lord first tried not to embarrass the ocean by crossing it forcefully without permission, so he tried to please the ocean god. But when the Lord found that he is adamant, the Lord drew his arrow to dry up the whole ocean. Terrified, the ocean god relented and begged forgiveness. He advised the Lord to build a bridge across the water, and so the great bridge was constructed.

The huge army which seemed to stretch till the horizon crossed the ocean, some walking over the bridge, some jumping over the back of the marine creatures who had come to the surface to watch the spectacle, some simply leaping to the other side, and some riding on the back of their friends and companions. It was a huge tide of monkeys and bears sweeping on the shores of Lanka. Thus, the Lord landed on Lanka.

This is the end of this fifth phase of the story called the ‘Sundar Kand’.

Now, let us see briefly what is so ‘Sundar’ or beautiful in this Kand. This phase is ‘beautiful’ because a new day has dawned beckoning of hope and redemption amid the previous environment of loss, gloom, grief, hopelessness and haplessness. Now onwards, despair and dejection are replaced by hope and rejoicing. Insurmountable and formidable barriers are overcome—the ocean is crossed, the obstacles in the form of the two demonesses are removed, the impregnable fortress of Lanka representing a den of vices, negativity, sins and evil is reduced to ashes, Sita and Vibhishan are both promised redemption, liberation and deliverance, and the ‘lost hope’ was converted into ‘attainable hope’, an attainable objective. Metaphorically, the creature who is firmly held captive to the entanglements of this deluding world but is yearning to break free from his fetters is assured that his redemption is at hand and the Lord is ever ready to take any trouble he has to take in order to liberate the creature and provide him deliverance from his torments should he be sincere and steadfast in his devotion, submission and love for the Lord.

The construction of the bridge has immense symbolic meaning. It signifies the bridging of the gap between hopelessness and hope, between despair and rejoicing, between the trapped creature and his salvation and redemption. The yawning gap of the ocean-like world of delusions and entrapments is no barrier wide enough or formidable enough which the Lord cannot overcome to provide the subjects of his creation with freedom from their torments and horrors if only they are sincerely desirous of the Lord’s intervention and help. Salvation and emancipation of the creature, liberation and deliverance of his soul are never an unreachable destination if he is steady in his spiritual pursuit and has steady faith and devotion for the Lord.

This ocean-like world of delusions cannot become a barrier strong enough to separate such a creature and his Atma (soul) from the Supreme Being who is the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma (Soul) of this world. The strong fort of Lanka representing the different shortcomings that the creature has that keeps him firmly shackled to this world will be broken in a moment if the creature sincerely prays to the Lord to provide him liberation and deliverance from this bondage.

This phase of the story is 'beautiful' because 'goodness and righteousness' are finally looking up and showing signs of triumph over 'bad and evil'. The gloomy and depressive phase is over, and it is replaced with courage, hope and victory.

Then we move on to the sixth phase of the story known as the Lanka Kand. It is the story of unmatched strength, valour, gallantry and courage, leading to victory and fame. The evil has finally been crushed underfoot and buried, and goodness has shone as bright as the sun.

Having landed on the shore of Lanka, Lord Ram made a last ditch attempt to avoid bloodshed by sending Angad, the son of Vaali and the nephew of Sugriv, as his messenger of peace to Ravana. A verbal duel followed between Angad and Ravana, and Angad planted his feet on the ground, challenging Ravana to move it. Should he be able to do it successfully, Angad promised him, it will be deemed that Lord Ram has lost the war, and if not, than Ravana be damned. All the courtiers tried their might but could not move Angad's feet an inch. Finally Ravana came himself, and then Angad rebuked him, saying 'you wretched one. Why do you kneel before me? Had you done it before Lord Ram, your whole clan would have found redemption.'

The ferocious war finally broke out. One by one all the demons were killed. During the course of the war, Laxman was wounded and Hanuman had to go the Himalayas to fetch the herbs which were used to bring Laxman back to life.

The last demon to die was Ravana himself, and as soon as he fell there was an uproarious cheer in the heavens. Vibhishan was crowned as the new king of Lanka, and Sita met her beloved husband Lord Ram. The dead monkeys who had fallen during the course of the war were all revived by the rain of Amrit (ambrosia of life) that Indra, the chief of the Gods rained from the sky, and the fallen demons too benefited as they all went to the heaven instead of to hell.

Lord Ram finally made his departure from Lanka for his own city of Ayodhya aboard the air plane known as 'Pushpak'. Besides Sita and Laxman, he was accompanied by his monkey and bear companions.

This is the end of the 'Lanka Kanda' which is also known as the Uddha or the War Kand.

Then we come to the seventh and the last phase of the story known as the Uttar Kand. The word 'Uttar' refers to the final phase of life, or the second half of a long story. Hence the name of this Kand as it marks the end of the Lord's first phase of his worldly sojourn and the beginning of the second phase when he began to rule the world as its king and emperor after having killed all the demons and fulfilling his promise to the earth, the sages and seers, and the Gods.

Hanuman was sent ahead to inform Bharat that the Lord is returning from his forest exile. The news spread like wild-fire in the city of Ayodhya, and the city erupted in joy. Bharat and the rest of them rushed outside the city, to its outskirts, where the Pushpak plane came down to the ground. There was a great reunion between the brothers,

a scene unmatched in this world. The Lord entered the city, and the withered and gloomy city became vibrant and lively once again. On an auspicious day and time, Lord Ram was crowned a king-emperor. There was celebration and festivities everywhere, on the earth and in the heaven.

The Lord ruled most righteously and according to the laws of Dharma (ethics, righteousness, probity, propriety, morality) and Satya (truthfulness). His rule was exemplary and there was happiness and prosperity everywhere.

By and by, a time came when the Lord had to wind up his worldly phase. The Lord had to obey the laws of Nature and he could not remain perpetually on earth. So some excuse had to be found. Certain developments motivated by the Supreme Lord himself were made to happen, due to which Sita was sent to exile to live in the care of the learned sage Valmiki in his hermitage. It was here that the Lord's two sons Lav and Kush were born.

Tulsidas has ended his story telling here. The saint could not bear to write more and describe how the Lord who was so dear to his heart and the essence of his life left this world and went back to his divine abode in the heaven. So Tulsidas decided to stop the story here. Symbolically, Tulsidas made Lord Ram live on this earth amongst us for all times to come. All other versions of the Ramayana, such as those written by sages Valmiki and Veda Vyas, have elaborately described the final phases of the Lord's earthly sojourn, but our Tulsidas preferred not to think of the Lord ever leaving us alone.

So shall it be! We too shall also end our narration here by describing the birth of Lav and Kush from Tulsidas' book Geetawali to wind up the story.

As a form of paying obeisance to the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram, the rest of this book is devoted to beautiful hymns and prayers dedicated to Lord Ram. It fills the heart of the devotee with ecstasy and makes him exhilarated when he as much as even utters the lovable name of the Lord as 'Ram'. There is indeed no other word as endearing and sweet as this single word 'Ram' in the entire lexicon of scriptural literature. This is the reason why Lord Shiva, known as 'Mahaa-dev', the Great God, the wisest and the most enlightened of the Gods, had adopted the name 'Ram' as the only spiritual formula for finding eternal peace and bliss. [Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 25.]

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A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name

[Based Entirely on Goswami Tulsidas' Classical Books: Ram Charit Manas, Geetawali, Kavitaawali, Barvai Ramayan, Vinai Patrika, Dohawali & Ram Tapini Upanishad, Anand Ramayan, Padma Puran, Skanda Puran, and other sources for Hymns / Strotas]

SECTION 1

Chapter 1

"KAAG BHUSUND RAMAYAN"

{This Chapter narrates the divine story of Ramayan in the words of the crow-saint Kaag Bhusund. It appears in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, 7/64/3 To 7/68 (KA). Though this text appears at the end of the original text, it has been brought in the beginning of this book because it acts to summarise the whole story and introduce the reader to the synopsis of the events that would unfold as he goes on reading the chapters one by one.}

Ram Charit Manas: 7/64/3 To 7/68 (KA)

अब श्रीराम कथा अति पावनि। सदा सुखद दुख पुंज नसावनि। 3
सादर तात सुनावहु मोही। बार बार बिनवउँ प्रभु तोही॥ 4 [7/64/3-4]

The King of Birds called Garud (who is the mount of Lord Vishnu) had some doubts regarding the Divinity of Lord Sri Ram; so he had approached sage Narad, the creator Brahama, and Lord Shiva to remove his delusions and doubts. Finally, Lord Shiva directed him to go to the hermitage of the crow named Kaag Bhusund who recites Lord Ram's story daily. Lord Shiva assured him that, on hearing the story, all his doubts will vanish.

At Kaag Bhusund hermitage, Garud requested the former to narrate the life story of Lord Sri Ram so that he can see the light of wisdom and get peace at heart. This history is eternally delightful and a cure for all spiritual torments and sufferings. [7/64/3-4]

प्रभु अवतार कथा पुनि गाई। तब सिसु चरित कहेसि मन लाई ॥ 9

After explaining the cause for the Lord's decision to take a divine form (incarnation) as Ram, Kaag Bhusund sang the story of Lord's incarnation (descent upon the earth) and then recounted the infancy, joys and events with great interest.[7/64/9]

दोहा- बालचरित कहि बिबिध बिधि मन महँ परम उछाह।
रिषि आगवन कहेसि पुनि श्रीरघुबीर बिबाह॥ [Doha 7/64]

He narrated the various pranks, joys and episodes during the childhood days of Lord Ram; then he described the arrival of sage Vishwamitra, and thereafter, the marriage of Lord Ram. [7/64].

बहुरि राम अभिषेक प्रसंगा। पुनि नृप बचन राज रस भंगा॥1
पुरवासिन्ह कर बिरह बिषादा। कहेसि राम लछिमन संबादा॥2
बिपिन गवन केवट अनुरागा। सुरसरि उतरि निवास प्रयागा॥3
बालमीक प्रभु मिलन बखाना। चित्रकूट जमि बसे भगवाना॥4
सचिवागवन नगर नृप मरना। भरतागवन प्रेम बहु बरना॥5
करि नृप क्रिया संग पुरबासी। भरत गए जहाँ प्रभु सुख रासी॥6
पुनि रघुपति बहुबिधि समुझाए। लै पादुका अवधपुर आए॥7
भरत रहनि सुरपति सुत करनी। प्रभु अरु अत्रि भेंट पुनि बरनी॥8 [7/65/1-8]

Then, Kaagbhusund narrated the plans for anointing Lord Ram as Prince-Regent and sudden interrupting of the ceremonies due to his father's pledges given to his step mother (1).

Then he described the agony of residents of Ayodhya on learning that Ram is being exiled for fourteen years as well as the conversation between Lord Ram and his brother Laxman (2).

This was followed by Ram's departure for the forest, the boatman's devotion and honour for the Lord, his crossing of river Ganga, and the halt at Prayag (3).

Thereafter, he described the meeting between sage Valmiki and Lord Ram, and how the Lord stayed at Chitrakoot (4).

The King's minister (who was sent by King Dasrath to accompany Lord Ram on a Chariot during his departure from Ayodhya) came back to the capital; and then, learning that he had returned alone without Lord Ram, King Dasrath died. Bharat came to Ayodhya and his love and devotion towards his brother (Lord Ram) was described in many ways (5).

Bharat performed his father's last rites and, accompanied by the residents of Ayodhya, he went to Chitrakoot where Lord Ram resided at that time (to bring him back). (6).

Lord Ram consoled him in all possible ways, and Bharat returned to Ayodhya bringing with him Lord Ram's sandals (wooden footwear) (7).

Kaagbhusund described the way Bharat lived at Ayodhya and then continued his narration with the episode involving the son of King of Gods, Jayant (son of Indra), and then described the meeting between Lord Ram and sage Atri. (8) [7/65/1-8]

दोहा- कहि बिराध बध जेहि बिधि देह तजी सरभंग ।
बरनि सुतीछन प्रीति पुनि प्रभु अगस्ति सतसंग ।। [Doha 7/65]

After describing demon Viradh's slaying and sage Sarbhang's leaving his mortal body, he went on to narrate sage Sutikshan's love/devotion and the communion of Lord Ram with sage Agastya.[7/65].

कहि दंडक बन पावनताई । गीध मइत्री पुनि तेहिं गाई ।।1
पुनि प्रभु पंचवटी कृत बासा । भंजी सकल मुनिन्ह की त्रासा ।।2
पुनि लछिमन उपदेस अनूपा । सूपनखा जिमि कीन्हि कुरूपा ।।3
पुनि दूषन बध बहुरि बखाना । जिमि सब मरमु दसानन जाना ।।4
दसकंधर मारीच बतकही । जेहि बिधि भई सो सब तेहिं कही ।।5
पुनि माया सीता कर हरना । श्री रघुबीर बिरह कछु बरना ।।6
पुनि प्रभु गीध क्रिया जिमि कीन्ही । बधि कंबंध सबरिहि गति दीन्ही ।।7
बहुरि बिरह बरनत रघुबीरा । जेहि बिधि गए सरोबर तीरा ।।8 [7/66/1-8]

After telling about the purification of Dandak-forest, Kaagbhusund narrated the friendship between Lord Ram and the Vulture (Jatayu) (1).

Thereafter, the Lord stayed at Panchvati forest and liberated all the sages of their agonies and torments (2).

Then was narrated his discourse to Laxman followed by how demoness Supernakha was mutilated (3).

Khar-Dusan's slaying and intimation of all this to 10-headed demon Ravana was described next (4)

Ravana's talk with Marich was narrated as it happened (5).

Then illusionary Sita was abducted (by Ravana) and a little of Lord Ram's desolation and lamentations was described. (6).

Thereafter, searching for Sita, Lord Ram performed the last rites of Vulture Jatayu and gave liberation to Kabandha by slaying him (7).

Lord Ram then went to the lake called Pampa, wailing for Sita all the way (8). [7/66/1-8]

दोहा- प्रभु नारद संबाद कहि मारुति मिलन प्रसंग ।
पुनि सुग्रीव मिताई बालि प्रान कर भंग ।। 66 Ka
कपिहि तिलक करि प्रभु कृत सैल प्रवरषन बास ।
बरनन बर्षा सरद अरु राम रोष कपि त्रास ।। 66 Kha [Doha 7/66, Ka, Kha]

Then Kaagbhusund narrated Lord Ram's conversation with sage Narad, his meeting with Sri Hanuman, son of Wind-God, his friendship with Monkey King Sugriv and slaying of (Sugriv's brother) Bali. (a).

Lord Ram anointed Sugriv as King of Kishkindha and took up residence on mount Pravarsan. Then followed an account of the rainy season and autumn, and Lord Ram's anger at Sugriv (b).[7/66]

जेहि बिधि कपिपति कीस पठाए। सीता खोज सकल दिसि धाए॥1
बिबर प्रबेस कीन्ह जेहि भाँती। कपिन्ह बहोरि मिला संपाती॥2
सुनि सब कथा समीरकुमारा। नाघत भयउ पयोधि अपारा॥3
लंकाँ कपि प्रबेस जिमि कीन्हा। पुनि सीतहि धीरजु जिमि दीन्हा॥4
बन उजारि रावनहिं प्रबोधी। पुर दहि नाघेउ बहुरि पयोधी॥5
आए कपि सब जहँ रघुराई। बैदेही की कुसल सुनाई॥6
सेन समेति जथा रघुबीरा। उतरे जाई बारिनिधि तीरा॥7
मिला बिभीषन जेहि बिधि आई। सागर निग्रह कथा सुनाई॥8 [7/67/1-8]

Kaagbhusund then continued his narration describing how the monkey king sent his messengers in all directions in search of Sita.(1); how the group sent towards the south entered a cave and met Sampati (Vulture Jatayu's brother) (2); how after hearing the news (about Sita's location at Lanka) the wind God's son (Hanuman) jumped over the vast ocean (3); how he entered Lanka and re-assured Sita (4); how he ruined (laid waste) the grove (garden of fruit trees where Sita was confined by Ravana), burned Lanka, challenged Ravana and leapt back across the ocean to where Lord Ram was (5), how he told Ram that Sita was all-right (6); how Lord Ram collected and assembled the army and encamped on the seashore (7); how Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to take refuge with him and how Ram was able to subjugate the ocean (8). [7/67/1-8].

दोहा- सेतु बाँधि कपि सेन जिमि उतरी सागर पार ।
गयउ बसीठी बीरबर जेहि बिधि बालिकुमार ।। Ka
निसिचर कीस लराई बरनिसि बिबिधि प्रकार ।
कुंभकरन घननाद कर बल पौरुष संघार ।। Kha [Doha 7/67 Ka, Kha]

Kaagbhusund then narrated how the monkeys built a bridge across the ocean, how they landed at Lanka and how the heroic (Son of Bali) Angad went as an envoy (in order to avoid war) to the court of Ravana (Ka).

Thereafter the battle between Demon (Ravana's army) and monkeys (Ram's army) was described in different ways. Kumbhkaran (Brother of Ravana) and Meghnad (his son) were eventually killed in battle (Kha). [Doha 7/67]

निसिचर निकर मरन बिधि नाना। रघुपति रावन समर बखाना॥1
रावन बध मंदोदरि सोका। राज बिभीषन देव असोका॥2
सीता रघुपति मिलन बहोरी। सुरन्ह कीन्हि अस्तुति कर जोरी॥3
पुनि पुष्पक चढ़ि कपिन्ह समेता। अवध चले प्रभु कृपा निकेता॥4
जेहि बिधि राम नगर निज आए। बायस बिसद चरित सब गाए॥5
कहेसि बहोरि राम अभिषेका। पुर बरनत नृपनीति अनेका॥6
कथा समस्त भुसुंड बखानी। (7) [7/68/1-7]

Continuing with his narration, Kaagbhusund then described the death of army of demons and the battle between Ram & Ravana (1); how Ravana was slayed and lamentation of his wife Mandodari, anointment of Vibhishan as King of Lanka and the Liberation of Gods from fear (of Ravana) (2).

Then he described the meeting of Sita with Ram, and how the Gods sang Lord Ram's glories with folded hands (3).

Thereafter, Ram mounted the plane called "Pushpak" with other monkeys and proceeded towards his capital Ayodhya. (4). He then described how Ram reached Ayodhya and sang all other holy deeds (of Lord Ram) (5).

After that he described Ram's coronation as King of Ayodhya and his polity (6).

This is how Kaagbhusund narrated the whole (sacred) life-story of Lord Ram to the bird King Garud. (7) [7/68/1-7]

Kaagbhusund sings the glory of Lord Ram in the following words.

निज मति सरिस नाथ मैं गई । प्रभु प्रताप महिमा खरगाई ॥1
 कहेउँ न कछु करि जुगुति बिसेषी । यह सब मैं निज नयनन्हि देखी ॥2
 महिमा नाम रूप गुन गाथा । सकल अमित अनंत रघुनाथा ॥3
 निज निज मति मुनि हरि गुन गावहिं । निगम सेष सिव पार न पावहिं ॥4
 तुम्हहि आदि खग मसक प्रजंता । नभ उड़ाहिं नहिं पावहिं अंता ॥5
 तिमि रघुपति महिमा अवगाहा । तात कबहुँ कोउ पाव कि थाहा ॥6
 रामु काम सत कोटि सुभग तन । दुर्गा कोटि अमित अरि मर्दन ॥7
 सक्र कोटि सत सरिस बिलासा । नभ सत कोटि अमित अवकासा ॥8 [7/91/1-8]
 दोहा- मरुत कोटि सत बिपुल बल रबि सत कोटि प्रकास ।
 ससि सत कोटि सुसीतल समन सकल भव त्रास ॥ (Ka)
 काल कोटि सत सरिस अति दुस्तर दुर्ग दुरंत ।
 धूमकेतु सत कोटि सम दुराधरष भगवंत ॥ (Kha) [Doha 7/91 Ka, Kha.]

"Oh Lord (Garuda) ! I have sung the glory of Lord Ram according to my intellect (1). I have not invented anything because I have seen all this with my own eyes (2). Glory of Ram's name, visible form, qualities, stories-all are endless, as is the Lord himself (3). Sages, saints, hermits, mystics, enlightened ones- all have sung His song according to their merit and reach; even Vedas, Lord Shiva, Sheshnath can't reach the end of it (4). All winged creatures (birds) like you fly high in the sky according to their capacity, but none can find the depth of it (5); even so, oh Garud, who can fathom the fathomless depth of Lord Ram's glory (6). Lord Ram's divine form has the beauty of numerous cupids; he can crush his enemies like countless goddess Durga (7); he has the luxuries of numerous Indras and expanse as great as countless skies (space) (8). [7/91/1-8]

He has the might of myriad wind-Gods, brilliance and dazzle of myriad suns, cool and comfort of myriad moons and dispels fears of mundane existence (Ka). Like numerous death-Gods, he is irresistible, unapproachable and interminable, and irrepressible like myriad fires (Kha) [Doh 7/91 Ka, Kha.]

- प्रभु अगाध सत कोटि पताला । समन कोटि सत सरिस कराला ॥1
 तीरथ अमित कोटि सम पावन । नाम अखिल अघ पूग नसावन ॥2
 हिमगिरि कोटि अचल रघुबीरा । सिंधु कोटि सत सम गंभीरा ॥3
 कामधेनु सत कोटि समाना । सकल काम दायक भगवाना ॥4
 सारद कोटि अमित चतुराई । बिधि सत कोटि सृष्टि निपुनाई ॥5
 बिष्णु कोटि सम पालन कर्ता । रुद्र कोटि सत सम संहर्ता ॥6
 धनद कोटि सत सम धनवाना । माया कोटि प्रपंच निधाना ॥7
 भार धरन सत कोटि अहीसा । निरवधि निरुपम प्रभु जगदीसा ॥8 [7/92/1-8]
- छन्द- निरुपम न उपमा आन राम समान रामु निगम कहै ।
 जिमि कोटि सत खद्योत सम रबि कहत अति लघुता लहै ॥ 1
 एहि भाँति निज निज मति बिलास मुनीस हरिहि बखानहीं ।
 प्रभु भाव गाहक अति कृपाल सप्रेम सुनि सुख मानहीं ॥ 2 [Chanda7/92/1-2.]
- दोहा- रामु अमित गुन सागर थाह कि पावइ कोइ ।
 संतन्ह सन जस किछु सुनेउँ तुम्हहि सुनायउँ सोइ ॥ (Ka)
- सोरठा- भाव बस्य भगवान सुख निधान करुना भवन ।
 तजि ममता पद मान भजिअ सदा सीता रवन ॥ (Kha) [Doha, Sortha: 7/92, Ka, Kha.]

He is fathomless like countless subterranean worlds, dreadful as countless Yamas¹ (God of Death) (1), sanctifying like countless holy places; his single name can obliterate and vanquish countless sins (2). He is immovable, stable, unwavering and serious as numerous Himalayas and deep as numerous seas (3). Like countless Kamdhenu cows², he can bestow one's wishes and boons (4), is wise like millions of Goddess Saraswatis³, expert in creation like millions of Brahmas⁴ (5), sustainer like million of Vishnus⁵, terminator like million of Shivas⁶ (6), rich like numerous Kubers⁷, creator of delusions like numerous Mayas⁸ (7) and bearer of weight of the world like countless Sheshnaths⁹. In brief, Lord Ram is the sovereign of Gods, Universe, is infinite and incomparable in every respect [7/92/1-8].

Vedas assert that Lord Ram has no peer, is incomparable even as it is ridiculous to compare the sun with a glow-worm (1). All the sages sing his glory according to their intellect and wit, and the Lord obliges them by listening to it for he respects the sentiments of his devotees (2). [Chanda 7/92/1-2.]

Lord Ram is an ocean of countless virtues, how can anyone find his depth ? I told you what little I know by way of hearing from other saints (Ka). The Lord is won-over by sincere devotion, love; he is fountain of joy, bliss and compassion. So, give up attachments, vanity, pride, delusions and adore Him (Kha). [Doha, Sortha—7/92/Ka, Kha].

[Note—¹Yama—He is the God of death. ²Kamdhenu cow—It is the all wish fulfilling cow of the Gods. ³Saraswati—She is the goddess of knowledge, wisdom and speech. ⁴Brahma—He is the first of the Trinity Gods and the creator of the visible creation. ⁵Vishnu—He is the second of the Trinity Gods and the sustainer and protector of creation. ⁶Shiva— He is the third of the Trinity Gods and the annihilator or concluder of creation. ⁷Kuber—He is the God's treasurer. ⁸Maya—

This is the delusion creating powers of the Supreme Being. ⁹Sheshnath—He is the legendary serpent said to hold the earth on its hood.]

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Chapter 2

{In this Chapter we shall read about the following topics in the words of Tulsidas—(1) The genesis of the story, (2) The reasons for the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu incarnating himself as Lord Ram, and (3) The havoc caused by the demons led by their king Ravana.}

The Genesis of the story of Lord Ram as narrated by Goswami Tulsidas:--
Genesis

{The divine and holy story of the Supreme Being's incarnation in the form of Lord Ram which has been described by Goswami Tulsidas in his various books, especially the one known the world over as the Ram Charit Manas which forms the basic text around which our book is structured, was first conceived in his heart and mind by Lord Shiva. He had told it first to his divine consort Parvati when she wished to know who Ram actually was and the glorious deeds that he did on earth.

In some horary past, this story was again revealed by Lord Shiva to the crow saint named Kaagbhusund. So he became the second one to hear it.

The third narrator was sage Yagyawalkya who told it to sage Bharadwaj and other assembled sages and seers during a religious congregation at the pilgrim place known as Prayag situated on the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the underground Saraswati.

Finally, our own Goswami Tulsidas was told this story by his Guru (teacher) named Narhari-das at a place known as Sukar-Kshetra. It is situated on the confluence of two rivers Saryu and Ghagra near the holy pilgrim city of Ayodhya. This is the city where Lord Ram had revealed himself as the son of king Dasrath to carry out the divine mandate of freeing the earth of its burden of cruel and sinful demons who have been ruthlessly tormenting the innocent and humble creatures of the earth.

All these facts have been mentioned in the epic 'Ram Charit Manas' (RCM) in its Baal Kand, Chaupai nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 30, and line nos. 1-2 of this Doha itself.

The story which we hear from Tulsidas and which unfolds in the coming pages is the one that was told to Bharadwaj by sage Yagyawalkya. Refer: RCM, Baal Kand, Doha 30 and its preceding Chaupai nos. 1-2, as well as Doha 31, Chaupai 1-3.}

Ram Charit Manas:--

संभु कीन्ह यह चरित सुहावा । बहुरि कृपा करि उमहि सुनावा ॥ ३ ॥
 सोइ सिव कागभुसुंडिहि दीन्हा । राम भगत अधिकारी चीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥
 तेहि सन जागबलिक पुनि पावा । तिन्ह पुनि भरद्वाज प्रति गावा ॥ ५ ॥ [1/30/3-5.]
 मैं पुनि निज गुर सन सुनी कथा सो सूकरखेत ।
 समुझी नहिं तसि बालपन तब अति रहेउँ अचेत ॥ ३० (क) ॥ [Doha-30 Ka.]
 तदपि कही गुर बारहिं बारा । समुझि परी कछु मति अनुसार ॥ १ ॥
 भाषाबद्ध करबि मैं सोई । मोरें मन प्रबोध जेहिं होई ॥ २ ॥
 जस कछु बुधि बिबेक बल मेरें । तस कहिहउँ हियँ हरि के प्रेरें ॥ ३ ॥ [1/31/1-3.]

Tulsidas says as follows—‘Lord Shambhu (Shiva) created (had first conceived) this pleasant, magnificent and beautiful story (in his heart and mind). He then graciously and out of kindness told it to his divine consort Uma (also known as Parvati). [3]

The same (divine and holy) story was given (told as a blessing) by Shiva to Kaagbhusund (the crow saint) because the Lord found him to be an eligible receiver qualified enough to receive and hear it. [This is because Kaagbhusund was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and this story is best told, heard and read by those who are receptive in their mind and heart, those who relish their divine message and enjoy the nectar of spiritual bliss that attends it. For skeptics, it is mysterious, but for those who the mystical ways of the Lord it ignites faith, devotion and love for the Supreme Lord known as Ram.] [4]

It was from him (Kaagbhusund) that sage Yagyawalkya received¹ (heard) it. He then sang² it (narrated, told it) to sage Bharadwaj. [5]

[¹The word ‘received’ is chosen to indicate that it is like a great spiritual gift, a precious treasure, a veritable boon, that one receives as a result of some great fortune and good deed. This story is not any ordinary pulp fiction or a historical novel that can be read when one wants refreshment and then put on the shelf of the library, only to gather dust and cobwebs. It is timeless and eternal spiritual nectar that one needs to dip oneself in and imbibe its spiritual bliss and happiness just like takes a dip in the refreshing water of a spring to rejuvenate the tired and weary body.

²The word ‘sang’ implies that the story was not narrated, and is not meant to be narrated, like any other story. It needs the involvement of the heart and a total submersion of the self in its melody. The story of Lord Ram is so captivating and enthralling that one begins to literally sing it from his heart, and its influence upon the hearer is also that of music—it touches the listener’s heart and emotions much deeper than a mere staccato narration of some events. This divine story of Lord Ram is the song of the heart and the mind, and not merely a scholarly rendering of some historical happening from some hoary past. Both the teller and the listener must be involved in it just like one gets involved when singing a melodious song.]

I (i.e. Tulsidas) have heard it from my own Guru (named Narhari-das) at Sukarkhet (Sukar-kshetra, a place known as Soron near Ayodhya). But it was in my childhood days, so I could not understand it fully at that time. [That is, I could not grasp its profound importance and spiritual import at the time I first heard it.] [Doha 30 Ka.]

Inspite of my incompetence, the kind Guru repeated it for me many times. So I was able to understand it according to my abilities and the intelligence of my mind. [1]

I shall now tell the same story, to the best of my abilities, in the form of verses spoken in the local dialect (known as Avadhi, a branch of Hindi) so that I can derive (mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual) solace and peace from it (i.e. from saying it). [2]

I shall now narrate this (divine and holy) story in whatever best way my mind and intellect allows me to do, in accordance with my intellectual abilities, wisdom and critical powers of thinking and narration, and in the way Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being) inspires me to say. [3]

{The divine story of Lord Ram that is popularly known as the Ramayan has many variations because the Lord has revealed himself many a times over different eras due to different circumstances and causes. This resulted in countless numbers of ways the divine story has been told and retold over the ages. There were countless narrators, and therefore the story assumed hundreds and thousands of forms in its finer detail. Each incarnation or manifestation of the Lord in any given era, called the Yuga, had some uniqueness in it, and the sages and seers have been singing this divine story for countless numbers of ways down the Yugas. Hence, the listener or the reader must not doubt it and its authenticity or authority or its truthfulness because it is so divergent and variable. This only shows that the story is warm, vibrant and rich with life because it is not frigid, stagnant and rigid.

Lord Ram is eternal and infinite, and so are his virtues and glories as well as his divine stories and deeds. Therefore those who are wise and have a purified mind, those whose intellect has a broad perspective and realise the diversity of creation should not be astonished by it, they should not be skeptical and doubt it in any way whatsoever. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 33 as well as line nos. 6-8 of the Chaupai that precedes it, and lines 1-3 of the Chaupai of Doha 34. }

Ram Chari Manas:--

- नाना भाँति राम अवतारा । रामायन सत कोटि अपारा ॥ ६ ॥
 कलपभेद हरिचरित सुहाए । भाँति अनेक मुनीसन्ह गाए ॥ ७ ॥
 करिअ न संसय अस उर आनी । सुनिअ कथा सादर रति मानी ॥ ८ ॥ [1/33/6-8.]
- दो०. राम अनंत अनंत गुन अमित कथा बिस्तार ।
 सुनि आचरजु न मानिहहिं जिन्ह केँ बिमल बिचार ॥ ३३ ॥ [Doha-33.]
- चौ०. एहि बिधि सब संसय करि दूरी । सिर धरि गुर पद पंकज धूरी ॥ १ ॥
 पुनि सबही बिनवउँ कर जोरी । करत कथा जेहिं लाग न खोरी ॥ २ ॥
 सादर सिवहि नाइ अब माथा । बरनउँ बिसद राम गुन गाथा ॥ ३ ॥ [1/33/1-3.]

Lord Ram (the Supreme Being) has manifested or revealed himself in countless forms and ways (in as many eras). As a result, the Ramayan (the divine story that recounts the glorious life, time and deeds of each such incarnation of the Lord) is also infinite and in hundreds and thousands of versions. [6]

The most pleasant and charming life and deeds of Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being who had manifested as Ram) vary from one Kalpa (era in one cycle of creation) to another, Many sages and seers have sung them over time in countless number of ways. [7]

Therefore, bearing this in mind the listener or the reader must not be skeptical about it (i.e. its truthfulness, authenticity and authority); he should not doubt it and distrust it. Instead, he should hear it with great devotion, reverence and faith. [8]

Lord Ram is infinite, and so are his virtues and glories as well as the dimension of his stories. Those who have a purified mind and intellect will therefore not be astonished or feel incredulous on hearing it. [Doha 33.]

In this way, removing all doubts and eliminating all skepticism, I (Tulsidas) put the dust of the Guru on my head (before I begin to tell this divine story). [1]

I fold my hands and touch my palms to humbly pray to all so that no error or blame can come to this narration. [Here Tulsidas asks for the blessing of all, whether he is big or small, whether he is learned or just plain layman, and requests them all to bless him so that the divine story he is about to narrate from his heart is not tainted by defects, loopholes, controversies and doubts.] [2]

I bow my head most reverentially before Lord Shiva and start my narration of the 'Gatha' (story, detailed narration) of the holy virtues and magnificent glories of Lord Ram (along with enumeration of the great deeds done by the Lord in this world during his incarnation) that are vast and immense in their dimension and import. [3]

The Reasons for the Supreme Being's incarnation as Lord Ram:--

{ We shall now read why the Supreme Being, known as Lord Vishnu or Hari, had to take a human form as Lord Ram. We shall quote the epic Ram Charit Manas for this purpose. }

Ram Charit Manas:

प्रथम सो कारन कहहु बिचारी । निर्गुन ब्रह्म सगुन बपु धारी ॥ [1/110/4]
 पूँछेहु रघुपति कथा प्रसंगा । सकल लोक जग पावनि गंगा ॥ [1/112/7]
 जथा अनंत राम भगवाना । तथा कथा कीरति गुन नाना ॥ 4
 तदपि जथा श्रुति जसि मति मोरी । कहिहउँ देखि प्रीति अति तोरी ॥ 5 [1/114/4-5]
 तस मैं समुखि सुनावउँ तोही । समुझि परइ जस कारन मोही ॥ 5
 जब जब होइ धरम कै हानी । बाढ़हिं असुर अधम अभिमानी ॥ 6
 करहिं अनीति जाइ नहिं बरनी । सीदहिं बिप्र धेनु सुर धरनी ॥ 7
 तब तब प्रभु धरि बिबिध सरीरा । हरहिं कृपानिधि सज्जन पीरा ॥ 8 [1/121/5-8]
 दोहा- असुर मारि थापहिं सुरन्ह राखहिं निज श्रुति सेतु ।
 जग बिस्तारहिं बिसद जस राम जन्म कर हेतु ॥ [Doha 1/121.]
 सोइ जस गाइ भगत भव तरहीं । कृपासिंधु जन हित तनु धरहीं ॥ 1
 राम जनम के हेतु अनेका । परम विचित्र एक तें एका ॥ 2
 जनम एक दुइ कहउँ बखानी । सावधान सुनु सुमति भवानी ॥ 3 [1/122/1-3]
 हरि अवतार हेतु जेहि होई । इदमित्थं कहि जाइ न सोई ॥ [1/121/2]

The consort of Lord Shiva, Parvati, asked him to tell her first the reason why the Formless Absolute Truth (Brahm) assumed a Formed Qualified Body (Ram) [1/110/4].

Lord Shiva replied, 'Dear, you have asked me to tell you the story of the Lord which is potent enough to purify and and make holy the three Lokas even as holy river Ganges can purify the earth [1/112/7]. Even as Lord Ram the Divine is endless and infinite, so are the manifold reasons for his incarnations and stories associated with them, as well as the gories and virtues of his various manifestations. Still, I shall tell you in brief as I have heard of them myself, according to the best of my ability and intellect [1/114/4-5; 1/121/5].

'Whenever righteousness and virtues declined, and vile and haughty demons were ascendant (6), whenever holy men, cows (holy, meek, harmless creatures), Gods and mother earth are in trouble (7), then always on such occasions the gracious Lord who is of a cosmic form that is all-encompassing but invisible, assumes a physical form that is visible out of mercy for His creation, and relieves them of their distress (8). [1/121/6-8]

Killing the demons, he reinstates the Gods, preserves the sanctity and propriety of Vedas, and spreads his divine glory in the world. This, in essence, is the motive behind The Formless Absolute Brahm manifesting in the form of a Divine Being called Ram who has a visible form and physical body [Doha 1/121].

The reasons for the Lord's various incarnations are many, each more wonderful and amusing than the other, but still I shall tell you a few births in brief, listen carefully. [1/122/1-3].

The precise reason for the Lord's birth can't be mentioned because it is beyond the grasp of anyone's intellect. However, I'll try.' [1/121/2].

द्वारपाल हरि के प्रिय दोऊ । जय अरु बिजय जान सब कोऊ ॥4
 बिप्र श्राप तें दूनउ भाई । तामस असुर देह तिन्ह पाई ॥5
 कनककसिपु अरु हाटक लोचन । जगत बिदित सुरपति मद मोचन ॥6
 बिजई समर बीर बिख्याता । धरि बराह बपु एक निपाता ॥7
 होइ नरहरि दूसर पुनि मारा । जन प्रहलाद सुजस बिस्तारा ॥8 [1/122/4-7]
 दोहा- भए निसाचर जाइ तेइ महाबीर बलवान ।
 कुंभकरन रावन सुभट सुर बिजई जग जान ॥ [Doha 1/122.]
 मुकुत न भए हते भगवाना । तीनि जनम द्विज बचन प्रवाना ॥1
 एक बार तिन्ह के हित लागी । धरेउ सरीर भगत अनुरागी ॥2
 कस्यप अदिति तहाँ पितु माता । दसरथ कौसल्या बिख्याता ॥3
 एक कलप एहि बिधि अवतारा । चरित पवित्र किए संसारा ॥4
 एक कलप सुर देखि दुखारे । समर जलंधर सन सब हारे ॥5
 संभु कीन्ह संग्राम अपारा । दनुज महाबल मरइ न मारा ॥6
 परम सती असुराधिप नारी । तेहिं बल ताहि न जितहिं पुरारी ॥7 [1/123/1-7]
 दोहा- छल करि टारेउ तासु ब्रत प्रभु सुर कारज कीन्ह ।
 जब तेहिं जानेउ मरम तब श्राप कोप करि दीन्ह ॥ [Doha 1/123.]
 तासु श्राप हरि दीन्ह प्रमाना । कौतुकनिधि कृपाल भगवाना ॥1
 तहाँ जलंधर रावन भयऊ । रन हति राम परम पद दयऊ ॥2
 एक जनम कर कारन एहा । जेहि लागि राम धरी नरदेहा ॥3

प्रति अवतार कथा प्रभु केरी । सुनु मुनि बरनी कबिन्ह घनेरी ॥4
नारद श्राप दीन्ह एक बारा । कल्प एक तेहि लागि अवतारा ॥5 [1/124/1-5]

Lord Hari (one of the names of Vishnu, the Lord of Gods) had two faithful gate-keepers called Jai and Vijay. Once, sage Sanak cursed them to become demons for three births in a row. So, Jaya became demon Hiranyakasapu and Vijya become Hiranyaksa (in their first birth). The Lord assumed the form of a Boar to liberate the former, and a Man-Lion form for the latter [1/122/4-7].

They became the demon once again because of the curse, and this time one became a demon by the name of Ravana and the other was called Kumbhakaran. So, Sri Hari took birth as Lord Ram to kill their demon-body and liberate their souls that was trapped inside it [Doha 1/122—Chaupai lines 1/123/1-2].

In that birth, the Lord's parents were Kasyapa who became Dasrath, and mother Aditi became Kaushalya. [1/123/3-4]

In another Kalpa [1 Kalpa = 4,32,00,00,000 years = one round of creation consisting of 4 Yugas viz. Sata, Treta, Dwapar, Kaali], the demon Jalandhar became invincible on the strength of his most virtuous, immaculately pure and fully chaste wife. Even Lord Shiva waged a long war, but could not defeat him. So the Lord broke the lady's vow of chastity by a trick, and the demon was killed. But the virtuous woman cursed the Lord that his wife would also be tricked to remain alone away from her husband in the custody of another person. To fulfil that curse, Jalandhar became Ravana, and Lord Ram had killed him so that he finds ultimate liberation for his soul [1/123/5 – 1/124/4].

On another occasion, sage Narad cursed the Lord himself that he would have to assume a human form and suffer the agony of separation from the lady whom he would love (i.e. from his wife Sita). This was the reason for the Lord's birth as a human in one other Kalpa [1/124/5].

स्वायंभू मनु अरु सतरूपा । जिन्ह तें भै नरसृष्टि अनूपा ॥1
नृप उत्तानपाद सुत तासू । ध्रुव हरि भगत भयउ सुत जासू ॥3 [1/142/1,3]
बरबस राज सुतहि तब दीन्हा । नारि समेत गवन बन कीन्हा ॥1 [1/143/1]
पुनि हरि केतु करन तप लागे । बारि अधार मूल फल त्यागे ॥2
उर अभिलाष निरंतर होई । देखिअ नयन परम प्रभु सोई ॥3 [1/144/2-3]
मागु मागु बरु भै नभ बानी । परम गभीर कृपामृत सानी ॥ [1/145/6]
सुनि प्रभु बचन जोरि जुग पानी । धरि धीरजु बोली मृदु बानी ॥1
एक लालसा बड़ि उर माहीं । सुगम अगम कहि जाति सो नाहीं ॥3 [1/149/1,3]
दोहा- दानि सिरोमनि कृपानिधि नाथ कहउँ सतिभाउ ।
चाहउँ तुम्हहि समान सुत प्रभु सन कवन दुराउ ॥ [Doha 1/149.]
देखि प्रीति सुनि बचन अमोले । एवमस्तु करुनानिधि बोले ॥ 1
आपु सरिस खोजौं कहँ जाई । नृप तव तनय होब मैं आई ॥ 2 [1/150/1-2]
इच्छामय नरवेष सँवारे । होइहउँ प्रगट निकेत तुम्हारे ॥ [1/152/1]

This human race was born from the First Man called Manu and First Woman called Satrupa [Legend and Purans tell us that, wanting to create, the creator called Brahma

divided himself into two halves— a male and a female for the purpose of creation]. [1/142/1].

Their celebrated son was Uttaanpad who had the world famous devotee son Dhruva [1/142/3]. Manu forcefully gave the kingdom to his son, and went to the forest to do austerity and penance [1/143/1]. They had a constant desire to have a look at the Lord with their own eyes [1/144/2-3]. Pleased with their penance, the Lord appeared before them and asked for a boon [1/145/6].

When the holy couple heard the divine voice of the Lord, they joined the palms of their hands, gathered courage, and said sweetly—‘Oh Lord! We have a great desire in our heart. It is so profound that we hesitate to tell it to you. [1/149/1,3] Oh merciful and compassionate Lord! You are extremely magnanimous and charitable, and are the greatest amongst those who grant boons and give alms. So we gather courage to tell you our desire—and it is to have a son who is like you. [In other words, we want you as our son because there is no one like you in this creation who can qualify to be equivalent to you.] Lord, there is nothing hidden from you, so we told you the truth.’ [Doha, 1/149.]

The Lord was pleased with their devotion, and the merciful Lord replied—‘So be it. Your wishes will be fulfilled. Where shall I search someone who is like me. So oh king, I shall become your son myself. [1/150/1-2.]. I shall assume the form of a human being out of my free will, and become your son, be assured of it.’ [1/152/1].

बिस्व बिदित एक कैकय देसू । सत्यकेतु तहँ बसइ नरेसू ॥2
 राज धनी जो जेठ सुत आही । नाम प्रतापभानु अस ताही ॥5 [1/153/2,5]
 चढ़ि बर बाजि बार एक राजा । मृगया कर सब साजि समाजा ॥ [1/156/3]
 गयउ दूरि घन गहन बराहू । जहँ नाहिन गज बाजि निबाहू ॥ [1/157/5]
 फिरत बिपिन आश्रम एक देखा । तहँ बस नृपति कपट मुनिबेषा ॥
 जासु देस नृप लीन्ह छड़ाई । समर सेन तजि गयउ पराई ॥2 [1/158/1-2]
 जेहिं रिपु छय सोइ रचेन्ह उपाऊ । भावी बस न जान कछु राऊ ॥ [1/170/8]
 दोहा- जरा मरन दुख रहित तनु समर जितै जनि कोउ ।
 एकछत्र रिपुहीन महि राज कलप सत होउ ॥ [Doha 1/164.]
 अवसि काज मैं करिहउँ तोरा । मन तन बचन भगत तैं मोरा ॥3
 जौं नरेस मैं करौं रसोई । तुम्ह परसहु मोहि जान न कोई ॥5
 अन्न सो जोइ जोइ भोजन करई । सोइ सोइ तव आयसु अनुसरई ॥6 [1/168/3,5-6]
 मायामय तेहिं कीन्हि रसोई । बिंजन बहु गनि सकइ न कोई ॥2
 बिबिध मृगन्ह कर आमिष राँधा । तेहि महुँ बिप्र माँसु खल साँधा ॥3
 भोजन कहुँ सब बिप्र बोलाए । पद पखारि सादर बैठाए ॥4
 परसन जबहिं लाग महिपाला । भै अकासबानी तेहि काला ॥5
 बिप्रबृंद उठि उठि गृह जाहू । है बड़ि हानि अन्न जनि खाहू ॥6
 भयउ रसोई भूसुर माँसू । सब द्विज उठे मानि बिस्वासू ॥7
 भूप बिकल मति मोहँ भुलानी । भावी बस न आव मुख बानी ॥8 [1/173/2-8]
 दोहा- बोले बिप्र सकोप तब नहिं कछु कीन्ह बिचार ।
 जाइ निसाचर होहु नृप मूढ़ सहित परिवार ॥ [Doha 1/173.]
 काल पाइ मुनि सुनु सोइ राजा । भयउ निसाचर सहित समाजा ॥1

दस सिर ताहि बीस भुजदंडा । रावन नाम बीर बरिबंडा ॥2
 भूप अनुज अरिमर्दन नामा । भयउ सो कुंभकरन बलधामा ॥3
 सचिव जो रहा धरमरुचि जासू । भयउ बिमात्र बंधु लघु तासू ॥4
 नाम बिभीषन जेहि जग जाना । बिष्नुभगत बिग्यान निधाना ॥5
 रहे जे सुत सेवक नृप केरे । भए निसाचर घोर घनेरे ॥6 [1/176/1-6]

A king called Satyaketu ruled in the kingdom called Kaikeya [1/153/2]. His eldest son was called Prataap Bhanu [1/153/5]. Once, Prataap Bhanu went to a dense forest to hunt, accompanied by his retinue of servants and ministers [1/156/3]. He went far away and lost track as well as his companions [1/157/5]. Wandering in the forest, he saw a hermitage of a king, disguised as a hermit, whose kingdom had been conquered by Prataap Bhanu on some earlier occasion. The defeated king had run away from the battlefield after deserting his army. [1/158/1-2].

Recalling the old grudge against Prataap Bhanu, the wicked hermit contrived a plot to wreak vengeance and exterminate his old enemy [1/170/8].

As is the wont of many a monarchs, Prataap Bhanu sought a boon that 'Let my body be age-less, death-less and beyond-suffering; let me be invincible in battle; let me be an undisputed sovereign of the earth; and let me have no enemy.' [Doha 1/164.]

[This greed for power, fame and eternity in a mortal world was his undoing.]

Seizing on this human-weakness of Prataap Bhanu, the deceitful hermit assured him that that is possible if he gives a feast for the Brahmins and get their blessings. The cunning hermit also offered to cook the food with special magical powers so that the Brahmins would obey Prataap Bhanu [1/168/3,5,6].

But on the fateful day, he mixed meat with the food. On learning of the fact, the holy men grew furious and cursed Prataap Bhanu to become a demon along with his entire family and kinsmen. [Chaupai lines 1/173/2-8, Doha 1/173.]

With the passage of time, he became the 10-headed demon Ravana; his younger brother Arimardan became Kumbha-karan; his honourable minister became the youngest brother Vibhishan who was the brave devotee of the Lord; and all other sons and kinsmen became other demons [1/176/1-6].

दोहा- बरनि न जाइ अनीति घोर निसाचर जो करहि ।
 हिंसा पर अति प्रीति तिन्ह के पापहि कवनि मिति ॥ [Doha 1/183.]
 दोहा- जानि सभय सुरभूमि सुनि बचन समेत सनेह ।
 गगनगिरा गंभीर भइ हरनि सोक संदेह ॥ [Doha 1/186.]
 जनि डरपहु मुनि सिद्ध सुरेसा । तुम्हहि लागि धरिहउँ नर बेसा ॥1
 अंसन्ह सहित मनुज अवतारा । लेहउँ दिनकर बंस उदारा ॥2
 कस्यप अदिति महातप कीन्हा । तिन्ह कहूँ मैं पूरब बर दीन्हा ॥ 3
 ते दसरथ कौसल्या रूपा । कोसलपुरीं प्रगट नरभूपा ॥4
 तिन्ह के गृह अवतरिहउँ जाई । रघुकुल तिलक सो चारिउ भाई ॥5
 नारद बचन सत्य सब करिहउँ । परम सक्ति समेत अवतरिहउँ ॥6
 हरिहउँ सकल भूमि गरुआई । निर्भय होहु देव समुदाई ॥7 [1/187/1-7]

The demons became outrageous and most vicious. There was no end or description of their evil-doings [Doha 1/183]. Realising that the Gods and the earth (representing all the animate and inanimate creatures that inhabited its surface and bowls) were terror-stricken, and hearing their prayful entreaty for intervention, the Lord answered from the heaven [Doha 1/186], 'Fear not! For your sake I shall assume the form of a human in the clan of king Raghu of the Solar Race (1-2). Kashayap and Aditi had done great penance, and I have already granted them a boon (3). They will be born as Dasrath and Kaushalya (4), and I shall be born in their household as their son (5). I shall fulfil Narad's curse as well (6). I shall then dispel all your fears and distresses—so do become fearless, oh the assemblage of Gods!!' (7). [1/187/1-7].

The demons led by their king Ravana and the havoc caused in this world by them:--
{Now we will read what havoc the demons caused on this earth which forced the Supreme Lord to intervene. For the purpose of this narration, we shall read the following verses from Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha 176, Chaupai line no. 7-8; Doha 178, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 to Doha 184, Chaupai line no. 2.}

Ram Charit Manas:--

कामरूप खल जिनस अनेका । कुटिल भयंकर बिगत बिबेका ॥ ७ ॥
कृपा रहित हिंसक सब पापी । बरनि न जाहिं बिस्व परितापी ॥ ८ ॥ [1/176/7-8.]
दो०. उपजे जदपि पुलस्त्यकुल पावन अमल अनूप ।
तदपि महीसुर श्राप बस भए सकल अघरूप ॥ १७६ ॥ [Doha-176.]

The demons could assume any form they wished and were born in many clans and orders. They were all extremely wicked, fierce, cruel, ruthless and merciless, as well as devoid of any sense of order, probity, morality, ethics and a sense of guilt at wrong doing. The torments and havoc they wreaked on this world is beyond description. [7-8]

Though they were born in the lineage of sage Pulastya who was very pious, holy and beyond reproach, these demons became a personified form of sin and horror on the curse of Brahmins ('Mahisur'). [Doha 176]

गिरि त्रिकूट एक सिंधु मझारी । बिधि निर्मित दुर्गम अति भारी ॥ ५ ॥
सोइ मय दानवें बहुरि सँवारा । कनक रचित मनिभवन अपारा ॥ ६ ॥
भोगावति जसि अहिकुल बासा । अमरावति जसि सक्रनिवासा ॥ ७ ॥
तिन्ह तें अधिक रज्ज अति बंका । जग बिज्यात नाम तेहि लंका ॥ ८ ॥ [1/178/5-8.]
दो०. खाईं सिंधु गभीर अति चारिहुँ दिसि फिरि आव ।
कनक कोट मनि खचित दूढ़ बरनि न जाइ बनाव ॥ १७८ (क) ॥
हरि प्रेरित जेहिं कलप जोइ जातुधानपति होइ ।
सूर प्रतापी अतुलबल दल समेत बस सोइ ॥ १७८ (ख) ॥ [Doha 178, Ka and Kha.]

There was a huge mountain with three peaks in the middle of the ocean, and on it was present a big fort made by the creator Brahma himself. [5]

A demon named Maya (who was a great architect) renovated and refurbished it. It had countless buildings made of gold and studded with gems and precious jewels. [6]

There is legendary city known as Bhogawati in the nether world where the serpents have their abode, and a city known as Amravati in the heaven where Indra ('Sakra') lives. [Indra is the king of Gods.] [7]

The city and the fort which Maya renovated were more magnificent and formidable than either of them. [8]

Around it was the deep and vast moat formed by the ocean. Its walls were made of gold and it was studded with gems and precious jewels. It was so wonderful that its architectural beauty defies description. [Doha 178, Ka.]

Whosoever becomes a brave, famous and illustrious king of the demon race as determined by Lord Hari (the Supreme Being) in any given cycle of creation makes this city and fort his capital. [Doha 178, Kha.]

- चौ०. रहे तहाँ निसिचर भट भारे । ते सब सुरन्ह समर संघारे ॥ १ ॥
 अब तहँ रहहिं सक्र के प्रेरे । रच्छक कोटि जच्छपति केरे ॥ २ ॥
 दसमुख कतहुँ खबरि असि पाई । सेन साजि गढ़ घेरेसि जाई ॥ ३ ॥
 देखि बिकट भट बड़ि कटकाई । जच्छ जीव लै गए पराई ॥ ४ ॥
 फिरि सब नगर दसानन देखा । गयउ सोच सुख भयउ बिसेषा ॥ ५ ॥
 सुंदर सहज अगम अनुमानी । कीन्हि तहाँ रावन रजधानी ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहि जस जोग बाँटि गृह दीन्हे । सुखी सकल रजनीचर कीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥
 एक बार कुबेर पर धावा । पुष्पक जान जीति लै आवा ॥ ८ ॥ [1/179/1-8.]
- दो०. कौतुकहीं कैलास पुनि लीन्हेसि जाइ उठाइ ।
 मनहुँ तौलि निज बाहुबल चला बहुत सुख पाइ ॥ १७९ ॥ [Doha 179.]

In some earlier time, great demon warriors lived there. They had all been killed by the Gods in battle. [1]

On the encouragement of Indra ('Sakra'), millions of guards of Kuber ('Yakshapati', the Lord of the Yakshas and the treasurer of Gods) came to live in the liberated city that became vacant (after the demons who had earlier occupied it were killed by the Gods). [2]

Somehow Ravana (the king of the demons) got the wind of this development (that the fort that had been vacated by the killing of the demons who occupied it has now been occupied by the guards of Kuber at the behest of Indra, his arch enemy). He assembled a huge demon army and besieged the city and its fort. [3]

When the Yakshas saw that the formidable demons have surrounded them, they fled for the fear of their lives. [4]

The victorious Ravana entered the city and inspected it. Finding it wonderful and charming, all his worries to find a place to stay for himself as well as his own clan of demons vanished (as he decided to occupy it and make it his capital). He became very pleased and satisfied with it. [5]

Deciding that it was an extremely beautiful, comfortable and a pleasant city to live in, and the fact that it was impenetrable for outsiders, Ravana made it his capital. [6]

He distributed the buildings of the city to the many demons who accompanied him according to their rank and eligibility. This made all the demons happy and contented. [7]

He once attacked Kuber and snatched the air plane called Pushpak from him. He brought it to his capital as a war trophy (marking his victory over Kuber, the treasurer of Gods). [8]

Bolstered and encouraged with this success, he (Ravana) once went and playfully lifted Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) as if he wished to measure the strength of his arms. Being successful in doing so, he felt very happy and pleased. Then he came back to his capital (Lanka). [Doha 179.]

चौ०. सुख संपत्ति सुत सेन सहाई । जय प्रताप बल बुद्धि बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥
 नित नूतन सब बाढ़त जाई । जिमि प्रतिलाभ लोभ अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥
 अतिबल कुंभकरन अस भ्राता । जेहि कहूँ नहिं प्रतिभट जग जाता ॥ ३ ॥
 करइ पान सोवइ षट मासा । जागत होइ तिहूँ पुर त्रासा ॥ ४ ॥
 जौं दिन प्रति अहार कर सोई । बिस्व बेगि सब चौपट होई ॥ ५ ॥
 समर धीर नहिं जाइ बखाना । तेहि सम अमित बीर बलवाना ॥ ६ ॥
 बारिदनाद जेठ सुत तासू । भट महुँ प्रथम लीक जग जासू ॥ ७ ॥
 जेहि न होइ रन सनमुख कोई । सुरपुर नितहिं परावन होई ॥ ८ ॥ [1/180/1-8.]

दो०. कुमुख अकंपन कुलिसरद धूमकेतु अतिकाय ।
 एक एक जग जीति सक ऐसे सुभट निकाय ॥ १८० ॥ [Doha 180.]

His (Ravana's) pleasures and happiness, wealth and prosperity, sons and army, servants and attendants, victory and conquest, strength and valour, tact and skills, as well as fame and glory increased day by day just like a man's greed and rapacity increase with each successive gain, profit, success or accomplishment. [1-2]

He had the strong and most powerful Kumbhakaran as his brother who had no other warrior to match him in strength and valour in this world. [3]

He (Kumbhakaran) used to drink wine a lot to fill himself, and then continuously sleep for six months. When he woke up from his slumber (after six months), there was all-round horror in all the three worlds; the worlds and their creatures trembled. [The 'three worlds' refers to the heaven, the earth and the nether world.] [4]

Had he eaten daily, the entire world would have been emptied of its food very soon. [This answers why there was horror everywhere. Kumbhakaran used to eat all food and livestock of the day he woke up from his sleep. The rest of the world had to starve. One can imagine the demon's appetite and the consequences on the rest of the world.] [5]

He (Kumbhakaran) was so courageous and valiant in the battlefield that it defied comparison and description. There were countless other warriors like him there (in Lanka). [6]

Baridnath (pronounced *Baaridnaath* (also known as Meghanad, pronounced as *Meghanaad*) was Ravana's eldest son. He was counted as number one in the list of great warriors of the world. [Meghanad got his name because he roared like the thunder. The name has two parts—'Megha' means cloud, and 'Naad' means a great roar.] [7]

No one dared to face in the battle-field, and there was a constant turmoil in the heaven out of his fear. [The Gods used to flee as soon as they heard his name or as soon as they heard that he is coming. They did not dare to confront him or annoy him.] [8]

Besides them, there were other very strong demon warriors such as Kumukh (also known as Durmukh), Akampan, Kulisarad (also known as Vajradanta), Dhumketu and Aktikaaye who could conquer the whole world single handedly. [Doha 180.]

- चौ०. कामरूप जानहिं सब माया । सपनेहुँ जिन्ह के धरम न दाया ॥ १ ॥
 दसमुख बैठ सभाँ एक बारा । देखि अमित आपन परिवारा ॥ २ ॥
 सुत समूह जन परिजन नाती । गनै को पार निसाचर जाती ॥ ३ ॥
 सेन बिलोकि सहज अभिमानी । बोला बचन क्रोध मद सानी ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनहु सकल रजनीचर जूथा । हमरे बैरी बिबुध बरूथा ॥ ५ ॥
 ते सनमुख नहिं करहिं लराई । देखि सबल रिपु जाहिं पराई ॥ ६ ॥
 तेह कर मरन एक बिधि होई । कहउँ बुझाइ सुनहु अब सोई ॥ ७ ॥
 द्विजभोजन मख होम सराधा । सब कै जाइ करहु तुझ बाधा ॥ ८ ॥ [1/181/1-8.]
- दो०. छुधा छीन बलहीन सुर सहजेहिं मिलिहहिं आइ ।
 तब मारिहउँ कि छाड़िहउँ भली भाँति अपनाइ ॥ १८१ ॥ [Doha 181.]

All the demons could assume any form they wished, and they were experts in demonic Maya (evil forms of deceit, conceit and maverick tricks). They knew no laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and rightful conduct), and neither did they have a trace of mercy and compassion in them even in their dreams. [1]

One day, while sitting in his court, Ravana glanced at his vast and extended family (consisting of the demon race). [2]

Sons, grandsons, kith and kin, servants and attendants, citizens and subjects of the demon kingdom—all of them were countless and in great abundance. Who can count their clans and orders? [3]

Watching his army (of demons, that was not only vast but invincible as well), Ravana, who was by nature extremely proud and haughty, said angrily in an arrogant voice—[4]

‘Listen all of you demon warriors. The Gods who live in the heaven are our enemies. They do not come and fight from the front. They run away when they are faced by a strong enemy (i.e. they are cowards). [5-6]

There is only one way by which they can be vanquished and killed. I will explain it to you all, listen carefully. [7]

All of you go and create an obstacle in the following activities and forcefully stop them—giving of food to Brahmins, various religious ceremonies, fire sacrifices involving offerings that are made to the sacred fire, and oblations as well as libations that are made to the spirit of dead ancestors. [This is because the Gods are sustained by these activities, and if you manage to stop them they would die due to starvation and lack of energy.] [8]

The Gods who would become weak and lose their strength and stamina due to hunger would come and submit themselves before us very easily. Then I will either kill them or make them completely a serf under me if I allow them to live. [Doha 181]

- चौ०. मेघनाद कहूँ पुनि हँकरावा । दीन्ही सिख बलु बयरु बड़ावा ॥ १ ॥
 जे सुर समर धीर बलवाना । जिन्ह कें लरिबे कर अभिमाना ॥ २ ॥
 तिन्हहि जीति रन आनेसु बाँधी । उठि सुत पितु अनुसासन काँधी ॥ ३ ॥
 एहि बिधि सबही अग्या दीन्ही । आपुन चलेउ गदा कर लीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥
 चलत दसानन डोलति अवनी । गर्जत गर्भ स्रवहिं सुर रवनी ॥ ५ ॥
 रावन आवत सुनेउ सकोहा । देवन्ह तके मेरु गिरि खोहा ॥ ६ ॥
 दिगपालन्ह के लोक सुहाए । सूने सकल दसानन पाए ॥ ७ ॥
 पुनि पुनि सिंघनाद करि भारी । देइ देवतन्ह गारि पचारी ॥ ८ ॥
 रन मद मत फिरइ जग धावा । प्रतिभट खोजत कतहुँ न पावा ॥ ९ ॥
 रबि ससि पवन बरुन धनधारी । अगिनि काल जम सब अधिकारी ॥ १० ॥
 किंनर सिद्ध मनुज सुर नागा । हठि सबही के पंथहिं लागा ॥ ११ ॥
 ब्रह्मसृष्टि जहँ लगि तनुधारी । दसमुख बसबती नर नारी ॥ १२ ॥
 आयसु करहिं सकल भयभीता । नवहिं आइ नित चरन बिनीता ॥ १३ ॥ [1/182/1-13.]
- दो०. भुजबल बिस्व बस्य करि राखेसि कोउ न सुतंत्र ।
 मंडलीक मनि रावन राज करइ निज मंत्र ॥ १८२ (क) ॥
 देव जच्छ गंधर्ब नर किंनर नाग कुमारि ।
 जीति बरीं निज बाहुबल बहु सुंदर बर नारि ॥ १८२ (ख) ॥ [Doha 182, Ka and Kha.]

Then he summoned Meghanad (his son) and taught him the various tricks and methods of the demons. He encouraged Meghanad to show more gut and agility, instigating him against the Gods, and provoking animosity and hatred in him for them. [1]

‘Oh son, listen. Those Gods who are strong and have the guts to stand courageously in the battle-field, and who are proud of their valour and strength—[2]

Defeat them in battle and bring them here tied in shackles.’ The son got up immediately and accepted the instructions of the father. [3]

In this way, he (Ravana) gave instructions to all of the demons, and he himself got up and went ahead with a mace in hand (to conquer the Gods and the world). [4]

The earth shook and trembled as Ravana walked stridently ahead, and the pregnant women folk of the Gods began aborting their embryos when they heard his thunderous roar. [5]

When the Gods heard that the angry Ravana is coming towards them, they got terrified and sought refuge in the caves of the mountain known as Sumeru. [This is the golden mountain in the heaven.] [6]

When the ten-headed Ravana arrived, he found all the abodes of the Dikpaals (custodians of the world, i.e. the Gods) empty (because they had already fled). [7]

He (Ravana) roared like a victorious lion, sarcastically abusing and scorning at the Gods and their cowardice. [8]

Intoxicated with pride of his strength, power and valour, as well as the thirst for blood, he went across the world searching for a warrior who would be a match for him, but he found none. [9]

Those who had the authority to rule in this world, such as the Sun God, the Moon God, Pawan (the Wind God), Varun (the Water God), Dhandhari (Kuber, the treasurer of

Gods), Agni (the Fire God), Kaal (the God of death), Yam (the God of hell), and those who did not have this authority, such as the Kinnars (a type of semi God), the Siddhas (mystics), the humans, the ordinary gods, and the serpents—he began tormenting them all, leaving none to live in peace. [10-11]

In the entire creation of Brahma, the creator, wherever any embodied creature lived, whether as a male or as a female, all of them became subservient to him (Ravana), all submitted themselves before his will. [12]

All of them obeyed him and came daily to bow before his feet (to pay their respects to him). [13]

He conquered and subdued the whole world by the strength of his arm. No one was free. In this way, Ravana forced himself upon the world and ruled over it as its supreme emperor. [Doha 182 Ka.]

By the might of his arms he conquered and married countless beautiful women of the Gods, Yakshas, Gandharvas, humans, Kinnars and serpents, as well as many other such excellent damsels. [Doha 182 Kha.]

चौ०. इंद्रजीत सन जो कछु कहेऊ । सो सब जनु पहिलेहिं करि रहेऊ ॥ १ ॥
 प्रथमहिं जिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीन्हा । तिन्ह कर चरित सुनहु जो कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
 देखत भीमरूप सब पापी । निसिचर निकर देव परितापी ॥ ३ ॥
 करहिं उपद्रव असुर निकाया । नाना रूप धरहिं करि माया ॥ ४ ॥
 जेहि बिधि होइ धर्म निर्मूला । सो सब करहिं बेद प्रतिकूला ॥ ५ ॥
 जेहिं जेहिं देस धेनु द्विज पावहिं । नगर गाउँ पुर आगि लगावहिं ॥ ६ ॥
 सुभ आचरन कतहुँ नहिं होई । देव बिप्र गुरु मान न कोई ॥ ७ ॥
 नहिं हरिभगति जग्य तप ग्याना । सपनेहुँ सुनिअ न बेद पुराना ॥ ८ ॥ [1/183/1-8.]

Whatever Indrajeet (Meghanad, the son of Ravana) was instructed to do, it appeared that he had already finished the assigned task even before the orders were given. [That is, he was just waiting for the instructions of Ravana, and as soon as he got them he immediately carried them out without any delay. Meghanad is called 'Indrajeet' because he had conquered Indra, the king of Gods.] [1]

Now listen to the (horrifying) deeds of those who were issued orders prior to Meghanad. [2]

All the demon hordes, called the 'Nisichars', were ferocious and abominable to look at. They were very sinful, cruel and pervert, causing immense miseries and troubles for the Gods. [The word 'Nisichar' literally means one who moves around in the night. The demons were given this name because they were sinful and evil, usurping things that rightfully belonged to others, stalked their enemies and attacked them when they were unarmed or unaware. This was tantamount to behaving like thieves and evil spirits that move out in the darkness of the night. The demons lacked ethics and morality, they were unrighteous and sinful—and all such negative traits are regarded as being equivalent to the darkness of the night.] [3]

These fearful groups of 'Asurs' (non-Gods) created havoc, going around doing a lot of mischief and outrageous deeds ruthlessly with impunity. They assumed myriad

types of forms as they wished and performed numerous evil acts of deceit, conceit and trickery. [4]

They did all those things which shook and weakened the foundation of (i.e. went against the) laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality and proper conduct). They did all those things which went against the laws of conduct ordained by the Vedas (primary body of scriptures). [5]

Wherever they found cows and Brahmins, they used to burn the whole town or the village to ashes. [6]

Out of their fear and wrath, nothing that was according to the laws of Dharma could be done anywhere in this world. No one bothered to obey, listen to and respect the Gods, the Brahmins and the Guru. [7]

There was no Bhakti (devotion) for Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being). There was no Yagya (religious ceremonies, especially the fire sacrifice), no Tapa (austerity and penance), and no Gyan (wisdom, truthful and righteous knowledge). One could not hear the Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures) even in one's dreams. [That is, the scriptures vanished from the world; no one read them, taught them or heard of them.] [8]

छं०. जप जोग बिरागा तप मख भागा श्रवन सुनइ दससीसा । [1]

आपुनु उठि धावइ रहै न पावइ धरि सब घालइ खीसा ॥ [2]

अस भ्रष्ट अचारा भा संसारा धर्म सुनिअ नहिं काना । [3]

तेहि बहुबिधि त्रासइ देस निकासइ जो कह बेद पुराना ॥ [4] [Chanda 1/183/1-4.]

If Ravana ever heard of Japa (repetition of holy hymns), Yoga (meditation), Vairagya (renunciation), Tapa (penance and austerity), Makh or Yagya (fire sacrifices and other religious ceremonies), and Bhaaga (offering to the sacred fire or the spirit of dead ancestors) etc. being done anywhere in the world, he would immediately rush there to stop it and punish those who did them. Nothing and no one was spared—he would destroy everything and kill everyone instantly. [Chanda, line nos. 1-2.]

Corruption, pervert tendencies, negativity, sinful deeds and thoughts, and all other such evil traits became so rampant in this world that one could not even hear of what is called Dharma. [That is, Dharma was completely obliterated and eclipsed.] [3]

If one dared to say the Vedas and the Purans, he (Ravana) would him to grave torment and threw him out of the country. [4]

सो०. बरनि न जाइ अनीति घोर निसाचर जो करहिं ।

हिंसा पर अति प्रीति तिन्ह के पापहि कवनि मिति ॥ १८३ ॥ [Sortha 1/183.]

The dimension and intensity of horrors, sinful acts and unrighteous deeds perpetrated by the demons defy narration and enumeration. Those who love cruelty and derive sadistic pleasure in bloodshed, say what is the limit of their sins? [Sortha 1/183.]

[Note—The 'Sortha' is a sort of Doha with some minor technical difference in its composition.]

चौ०. बाढ़े खल बहु चोर जुआरा । जे लंपट परधन परदारा ॥

मानहिं मातु पिता नहिं देवा । साधुन्ह सन करवावहिं सेवा ॥ १ ॥ [1/184/1.]

There was a manifold increase in the number of those who were villains, thieves and gamblers, as well as the wicked, the crooked, and those who coveted the wealth and the wives of others. No one bothered and paid any heed to one's mother, father and Gods. People forced the saints and other holy and pious ones to serve them like servants. [1/184/1.]

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Chapter 3

Baal Kand

{This chapter deals with (1) Lord Ram's birth, (2) Day of Birth, (3) Birth Celebrations, (4) Naming Ceremony, (5) Childhood pranks, (6) Education (7) Arrival of Vishwamitra, (8) Encounter with Demons, (9) Liberation of Ahilya, (10) Arrival at Janakpur, (11) Invitation for Bow-Breaking Ceremony, (12) Purpose of Ceremony, (13) Bow-Breaking, (14) Parashuram's anger, (15) Invitation to Dasrath, Departure of Baraat (marriage party), (16) Arrival of Marriage Party at Janakpur, (17) Marriage, (18) Brothers' marriage, (19) Departure of Baraat, (23) Arrival at Ayodhya and Celebrations.

This Kand or Canto is called 'Baal' because it deals with Lord Ram's childhood days till the time he became a youth and married.}

Birth : {The Lord kept his words given to earth, the gods and the sages earlier, and manifested on earth as Lord Ram. Now, we shall quote Tulsidas' different classics to read what happened.}

Ram Charit Manas

अवधपुरी रघुकुलमनि राऊ । बेद बिदित तेहि दसरथ नाऊँ ।
 धरम धुरंधर गुननिधि ग्यानी । हृदयँ भगति मति सारँगपानी ॥
 दोहा- कौसल्यादि नारि प्रिय सब आचरन पुनीत ।
 पति अनुकूल प्रेम दृढ़ हरि पद कमल बिनीत ॥ [Chaupai lines 1/188/7, 8, Doha 188]

In the city of Ayodhya, there ruled a king called Dasrath who was also famed in the Vedas. He was expert in righteous behaviour, was full of wisdom and good qualities, and had a heart that was full of devotion. His senior wife was called Kaushalya. All the queens of Dasrath were of noble character and devoted wives. They were all also devoted to God. [Chaupai lines 1/188/7, 8, Doha 188]

एक बार भूपति मन माहीं। भै गलानि मोरें सुत नाहीं।।1
 गुर गृह गयउ तुरत महिपाला। चरन लागि करि बिनय बिसाला।।2
 निज दुख सुख सब गुरहि सुनायउ। कहि बसिष्ठ बहुबिधि समुझायउ।।3
 सृंगी रिषिहि बसिष्ठ बोलावा। पुत्रकाम सुभ जग्य करावा।।5
 भगति सहित मुनि आहुति दीन्हें। प्रगटे अग्नि चरू कर लीन्हें।।6
 यह हबि बाँटि देहु नृप जाई। जथा जोग जेहि भाग बनाई।।8 [1/189/1-8]

Saddened that he had no son and heir, King Dasrath went to his Guru (teacher; court-preceptor) Vashistha and told him about his predicaments after paying due obeisance to him. Vashistha re-assured him and called sage Sringi to perform a fire sacrifice so that the king is blessed with a son and heir. When oblations were offered in the sacred fire, the Fire-God appeared with a pudding or porridge made from rice and sweetened milk, and asked the king to distribute it among his chief consorts, saying that then they would be blessed with children as desired by the king.

Thus, all the queens became pregnant with the divine Holy Spirit. In due course of time, the Four Divine Brothers were born—‘Ram’ was born to the chief queen Kaushalya, ‘Bharat’ was born to Kaikeyi, and ‘Laxman’ along with the youngest brother ‘Shatrughan’ were born to Sumitra. (1/189/1-8)

Day of Birth : Ram Charit Manas

नौमी तिथि मधु मास पुनीता। सुकल पच्छ अभिजित हरिप्रीता।।1
 मध्यदिवस अति सीत न घामा। पावन काल लोक बिश्रामा।।2
 सीतल मंद सुरभि बह बाऊ। हरषित सुर संतन मन चाऊ।।3
 बन कुसुमित गिरिगन मनिआरा। स्रवहिं सकल सरिताऽमृतधारा।।4
 सो अवसर बिरंचि जब जाना। चले सकल सुर साजि बिमाना।।5 [1/191/1-5]
 दोहा- सुर समूह बिनती करि पहुँचे निज निज धाम।
 जगनिवास प्रभु प्रगटे अखिल लोक बिश्राम।। [Doha 1/191]

In the 2nd Yug (era, Kaal) according to Hindu system, the era called Treta Yug, it was the 9th day of the Hindu calender month of Chaitra, the moon had entered the 2nd half of its brightness in the cluster of stars called 'Abhijit'. The sun was in its meridian (i.e. it was noon-time), and the day was neither cold nor hot. The period was most auspicious and holy, and the whole world felt relaxed and comfortable (because its worries and torments were about to be taken care of with the birth of the Supreme Lord to look after its welfare personally).

A cool, soft and fragrant breeze blew across the land, while the Gods were exhilarant and full of enthusiasm at this moment. The verdant forests were full of colourful flowers blooming in their full magnificence, the mountains were illuminated with the shine of glittering gems and brightly lit by their light, and the rivers appeared to be overflowing with nectar.

When the creator Brahma came to know that the time of Lord's birth has arrived, he along with other Gods mounted their aerial vehicles and came to pay their obeisance to the child Lord. After they had returned to their respective abodes, the Lord—who lives everywhere in this world in an invisible form because he is all-pervading, ubiquitous and omnipresent in this creation, and who is a provider of solace and succour to the whole of it—manifested himself (as a child). [Chaupai lines 1/191/1-5, Doha 191]

Birth : Geetawali—Verse no. 1/1/1-3—

आजु सुदिन सुभ घरी सुहाई।
 रूप-सील-गुन-धाम राम नृप-भवन प्रगट भए आई॥1
 अति पुनीत मधुमास, लगन-ग्रह-बार-जोग-समुदाई।
 हरषवंत चर-अचर, भूमिसुर-तनरुह पुलक जनाई॥2
 वरषहिं बिबुध-निकर कुसुमावलि, नभ दुंदभी बजाई॥
 कौसल्यादि मातु मन हरषित, यह सुख बरनि न जाई॥3 [1/1/1-3]

Verse no. 1/1-3—Today is a very holy, auspicious and happy day, and the time is also very auspicious and pleasant. Today Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of beauty, noble conduct and such other virtues of the highest dimension, has taken a divine birth in the palace of king Dasrath (1). It is the pious and holy month of Chaitra, and all the stars, the day of the week and the astrological signs etc. are compatible. All living beings are full of joy and cheer, and the Brahmins are enthusiastic (2). The Gods are blowing their trumpets and showering flowers from the sky to celebrate the happy occasion. Kaushalya and other mothers are also extremely happy. I (Tulsidas) cannot describe this happiness in limited words (3) [1/1-3]

[Note—We will see in the course of our reading that Tulsidas has fluently used the present tense in his narrative. It gives us the impression that he was actually witnessing the events as they happened. But it must be remembered that the events occurred during Treta Yuga which was thousands of years before Tulsidas was even born. The point of the matter is this that the saint had reached such a higher state of transcendental existence that his Spirit could travel back in time and space to that era about which he is writing. Tulsidas was no ordinary poet; he was a blessed soul especially empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill some divine work. He also had had a Darshan (divine sight) of his beloved Lord Ram as well as of Hanuman, another great devotee of the Lord and an incarnate Lord Rudra (Shiva).

When the Lord employed Tulsidas to become a scribe for him it is natural that the Lord must have arranged for necessary instruments for his writings so as to make them sanctified and bear the stamp of authenticity. So, when Tulsidas picked up his pen to write, he was possessed of the Holy Spirit, and the writing

was done not by an ordinary man but by the Holy Spirit itself through the body of this particular man named Tulsidas.

When he sat down to pen his writings on Lord Ram and his times, Tulsidas must have closed his eyes in deep meditation, and in this contemplative state of the consciousness he must have actually seen the events unfold before the eyes of his mind and sub-conscious in vivid detail. Naturally therefore, what he wrote was not a wild fascination and an imagination of a poetic mind but a faithful narration of events that happened long time ago.

Remember, what we are dealing with in this story is not something related to visible matter and to the material world of things and substances, but to the divine transcendental world of the Holy Spirit, a world that transcends time and space and which is beyond our comprehension. The body is perishable like the world of matter and material things, but the Spirit is imperishable like the wind and the sky. Just as it is not possible for the gross body to go everywhere it likes, the grosser aspect of the mind is not able to fathom the reach of the Spirit. Again, just as it is very easy for the subtle wind to go wherever it wants and the subtler aspect of the same wind in the form of air to be present everywhere without being noticed, the Spirit too is present everywhere at all times. The only difference between an ordinary man and a realised man is that while the former believes only in things that his grosser mind that relates its self to the gross body allows him believe, the latter type of man rises above the mundane and observes everything from the plain of the Spirit, a plain that relates to the transcendental consciousness, and an existence that is not moribund and shackled to this world.

So we must not be sceptic about something simply because we can't understand it or have not experienced it or can't even imagine of. For instance, could any one imagine about the internet and mobile phone say even fifty years back? Even today, if someone goes to some tribal area on the mountain or the hinterland that is still not reached by modern technology and development, and talk with people living there in the jargon of the internet and the mobile telephony, will they understand? But does their not being able to understand mean that the speaker is saying a lie? When the first human voice was transmitted across the wire, or when the first electric bulb created man-made light, or when the first picture was seen on a screen of the television set sitting on a desk—would anyone in some country where this idea had not reached would believe another if he told the former that this happens?

The idea is, Tulsidas actually saw on the events unfold on the canvas of his mind and sub-conscious because he was a realised and an empowered soul, a man who lived in a state of transcendental existence of consciousness. For such souls, nothing is impossible, nothing is too far-fetched, nothing is impossible.]

Geetawali: Raag Jaitsree—Verse no. 1/4—

गावैं बिबुध बिमल बर बानी ।
भुवन-कोटि-कल्यान-कंद जो, जायो पूत कौसिला रानी ॥ १ ॥
मास, पाख, तिथि, बार, नखत, ग्रह, जोग, लगन सुभ ठानी ।

जल-थल-गगन प्रसन्न साधु-मन, दस दिसि हिय हुलसानी ॥ 2 ॥
 बरषत सुमन, बधाव नगर-नभ, हरष न जात बखानी ।
 ज्यों हुलास रनिवास नरेसहि, त्यों जनपद रजधानी ॥ 3 ॥
 अमर, नाग, मुनि, मनुज सपरिजन बिगतबिषाद-गलानी ।
 मिलेहि माँझ रावन रजनीचर लंक संक अकुलानी ॥ 4 ॥
 देव-पितर, गुरु-बिप्र पूजि नृप दिये दान रुचि जानी ।
 मुनि-बनिता, पुरनारि, सुआसिनि सहस भाँति सनमानी ॥ 5 ॥
 पाइ अघाइ असीसत निकसत जाचक-जन भए दानी ।
 'यों प्रसन्न कैकयी सुमित्रहिं होउ महेस-भवानी' ॥ 6 ॥
 दिन दूसरे भूप-भामिनी दोउ भई सुमंगल-खानी ।
 भयो सोहिलो सोहिलो मो जनु सृष्टि सोहिलो-सानी ॥ 7 ॥
 गावत-नाचत, मो मन भावत, सुख सों अवध अधिकानी ।
 देत-लेत, पहिरत-पहिरावत प्रजा प्रमोद-अघानी ॥ 8 ॥
 गान-निसान-कुलाहल-कौतुक देखत दुनी सिहानी ।
 हरि बिरचि-हर-पुर सोभा कुलि कोसलपुरी लोभानी ॥ 9 ॥
 आनँद-अवनि, राजरानी सब माँगहु कोखि जुड़ानी ।
 आसिष दै दै सराहहिं सादर उमा-रमा-ब्रह्मानी ॥ 10 ॥
 बिभव-बिलास-बाढ़ि दसरथकी देखि न जिनहिं सोहानी ।
 कीरति, कुसल, भूति, जय, ऋषि-सिधि तिन्हपर सबै कोहानी ॥ 11 ॥
 छठी-बारहौं लोक-बेद-बिधि करि सुबिधान बिधानी ।
 राम-लषन-रपुदवन-भरव धरे नाम ललित गुर ग्यानी ॥ 12 ॥
 सुकृत-सुमन तिल-मोद बासि बिधि जतन-जंत्र भरि घानी ।
 सुख-सनेह सब दिये दसरथहि खरि खलेल थिर-थानी ॥ 13 ॥
 अनुदिन उदय-उछाह, उमग जग, घर-घर अवध कहानी ।
 तुलसी राम-जनम-जस गावत सो समाज उर आनी ॥ 14 ॥

Verse no. 1/4—¹The Gods sing in unison the glory of the divine birth of Lord Ram in a voice that is not only sweet, endearing and pleasant but also auspicious and full of respect for the divine revelation in the form of a child. They said—"The son, who has been born to Kaushalya, is the root (the very essence or the cause) of auspiciousness and welfare of millions of Bhuvans (i.e. of the entire universe)' (1).

The month, quarter, date, day, stars, planets, their combinations and presence in the birth charts—all are very auspicious and favourable. The waters (of the oceans, rivers, lakes etc.), land, sky and the hearts of sages and hermits are all extremely happy and exhilarant, and jubilation and euphoria have filled all the 10 directions of the world² (2).

There is a rain of flowers, and felicitation songs are being sung in the sky as well as in the city. No one can describe the euphoric and jubilant mood of the people as well as of the Gods. The city (Ayodhya) and the realm (kingdom) have the same degree of happiness and merriment as is being witnessed inside the palace of the king (3).

The Gods, the serpents (subterranean creatures), the sages and hermits, ordinary citizens along with their kins and relatives—all have become free from sorrows and worries of all kinds, whereas the demons and their king the ten-headed Ravana along

with the whole city of Lanka have become agitated and worried due to suspicious forebodings and evil omens portending doom and destruction for them (4).

The king has given charities according to the desires (or needs and wants) of the Gods, the (dead) ancestors, the Guru (Vashistha) and the Brahmins after duly worshipping them and paying his obeisance to them. He has shown great respect and given honour in countless number of ways to women of chastity and good repute, such as the different hermitresses and ordinary women of the city (5).

The alm-seekers are fully satisfied so much so that they have themselves become donors. Emerging from the king's doorway (i.e. palace gates), they invoke the blessing of Lord Shiva and his divine consort goddess Parvati, requesting them to become as pleased, benignant and gracious on Kaikeyi and Sumitra as they had been on Kaushalya (so that they too beget sons like hers) (6).

On the day following the birth of Lord Ram, those two queens also became a mine of auspiciousness and good fortunes (because they were also blessed with sons named Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan). In this way, there is one auspicious and cheerful event followed by another as if the whole creation is kneaded with the nectar of happiness and rejoicing, as if the whole world is soaked in, drowned in and engulfed in waves after waves of happiness and rejoicing (7).

Everyone is dancing in ecstasy and singing in abundant merriment. I (Tulsidas) too rejoice and submerge myself in the ocean of merriment that heaves and surges all around me in the form of endless festivities. The intensity of happiness and rejoicing has increased manifold (as Lord Ram's birth has been followed by the birth of his other three beautiful brothers). All the subjects (citizens of Ayodhya) are so overwhelmed with happiness, ecstasy and jubilation that they give and accept gifts in abundance; they wear new clothes themselves and make others wear them to mark this happy occasion in their lives (8).

Hearing the cacophony and clamour of musical instruments being played and enchanting songs being sung, the whole world is awestruck and enthralled. The glamour and charm of the celestial cities of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are themselves in awe at the beauty, charm and magnificence of Ayodhya on that auspicious occasion (9).

All the queens of the palace (i.e. Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra) are exceedingly exhilarated because they have been blessed with a fruitful womb (i.e. by being able to beget such divine and exalted sons) and having a contented married life (by having a favourable husband). Even the Goddesses Uma (Parvati), Rama (Laxmi) and Brahmani (Brahma's consort) bless them and praise their good fortune and immense luck (10).

All those who did not like or were jealous of the enhancement of the good fortune, the fame, the glory, the majesty and the happiness of king Dasrath as well as the grandeur, the pageantry and the jubilation of that time—the virtues of 'Kirti' (fame, renown), 'Kushal' (well-being, welfares, auspiciousness, good luck and foreboding), 'Vaibhav' (power, pageantry, pomp, glories, majesty, grandeur, magnificence etc.) and 'Riddhi-Siddhi' (all encompassing achievements, successes, prosperity, wealth, auspiciousness etc.) become wrathful, indignant and angry upon them. [Here, Kirti, Kushal, Vaibhav, and Riddhi-Siddhi have been personified. They became extremely angry at anyone who became jealous of or was opposed to king Dasrath at that auspicious time. In other words, anyone who became annoyed at the good fortune of king Dasrath

was cursed by the patron Gods of these virtues so much so that these virtues abandoned them, and they were made to regret for their sense of selfishness, for their uncalled for jealousy, for their mistrust and envy for Dasrath.] (11).

Guru Vashistha, who was an expert in the laws or sanctions of the scriptures, observed all the traditions of the society and requirements of the Vedas, and performed the 'Chatthi-Barahi' ritual of the children. The learned sage gave the following beautiful, elegant, divine, auspicious and sweet names to the four children—viz. Ram, Laxman, Shatrughan and Bharat. [The 'Chatthi-Barahi' is the ritualistic sacraments observed on the 6th and 12th day of child birth.] (12).

(It appears that at this time) The creator has extracted the sweet fragrance and the aroma of happiness, rejoicing, ecstasy and exhilaration from the sesame seeds by crushing them in an instrument (mill) representing diligent, careful and deliberate efforts, and has imbued (soaked) it in the flowers representing righteousness, good deeds and all noble virtues and their accoutrements, and then had offered this extract (essence) to Dasrath, while the residue and husk (left over after extracting happiness and pleasure) representing lustre-less and useless things to the Digpals (custodians of the world). [Tulsidas means that all auspiciousness and good fortunes that existed in this world, all the happiness and good tidings that one could imagine of belonged to Dasrath on that happy day of the Lord's birth in his household.] (13).

Everyday since that auspicious day of the Lord's birth in this world, there is excitement and jubilation all round. And the auspicious news of the Lord's birth and his advent on the earth that emanated from the city of Ayodhya is being narrated, retold and heard in every household of the realm of the kingdom of Dasrath as well as in the rest of the world at large. Tulsidas joins the spirit of festivities and celebrations on this happy occasion of birth of Lord Ram, and lets this exhilaration and euphoria enter his heart and soak it in its nectar. [That is, Tulsidas allows his heart to indulge in and submerge it's self in the heaving ocean of exceptional happiness and jubilation that surrounds him on all sides when Lord Ram took birth in this world.] (14).

[Note—¹These verses are in the 'present tense narrative' because Tulsidas had transcended the barrier of time and space, and had transported himself to that point of time when Lord Ram was actually born. He writes what he sees, and this is the reason of his using the present tense in the narrative. He imagines himself to be present in Ayodhya like a scribe reporting the events of Lord Ram's divine advent on earth. The fascinating aspect, the magic and charm of the narrative is in this use of the present tense and the first hand account of the happenings of that time that actually occurred long ago. This shows that saint Tulsidas was actually seeing what really happened at the time of Lord Ram's auspicious birth on the canvas of his mind and the sub-conscious like one sees a movie when he picked up his pen to narrate the events.

²The 10 directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

ध्वज पताक तोरन पुर छावा। कहि न जाइ तेहि भाँति बनावा।।
 सुमनवृष्टि अकास तें होई। ब्रह्मानंद मगन सब लोई।।2 [1/194/1-2]
 वह सुख संपति समय समाजा। कहि न सकइ सारद अहिराजा।।2
 अवधपुरी सोहइ एहि भाँती। प्रभुहि मिलन आई जनु राती।।3
 अगर धूप बहु जनु अँधिआरी। उड़इ अबीर मनहुँ अरुनारी।।5
 मंदिर मनि समूह जनु तारा। नृप गृह कलस सो इंदु उदारा।।6
 कौतुक देखि पतंग भुलाना। एक मास तेई जात न जाना।।8 [1/195/2-3, 5-6,8]

The city was decorated with flags, banners, buntings, arches and gates which defy description. Flowers were showered from the sky (by the Gods), and everyone was raptured in extreme joyfulness. That joy, grandeur, assembly and solemnity of the occasion could not be described even by Goddess Saraswati or Serpent King (Sheshnath). Ayodhya was so decked-up for this most auspicious and precious occasion that it appeared that night felt ashamed to come over its sky (i.e. it was brightly lit day and night). Thick clouds from incense-sticks and coloured powder tossed by jubilant people covered the sky in all the directions. The palaces and houses of the city gleamed and twinkled like stars, and the brilliant Kalas (the decorative gem-studded pinnacle or cupola) on the top of the King's palace shown like a full moon. Seeing this wonder, the sun forgot to move, and one full month passed (in day light-like appearance) before he moved ahead in the sky. [That is, the celebrations and festive atmosphere in Ayodhya lasted for 1 full month from the day Lord Ram was born.] (1/194/1-2) [1/195/2-3,5-6,8]

Geetawali : Verse no. 1/ 4-8—

सुनि दसरथ सुत-जनम लिए सब गुरुजन बिप्र बोलाई।
 वेद-विहित करि क्रिया परम सुचि, आनंद उर न समाई।।4
 सदन बेद-धुनि करत मधुर मुनि, बहु बिधि बाज बधाई।
 पुरबासिन्ह प्रिय नाथ-हेतु निज निज संपदा लुटाई।।5
 मनि-तोरन, बहु केतुपताकनि पुरी रुचिर करि छाई।
 मागध-सूत द्वार बंदीजन जहँ तहँ करत बड़ाई।।6
 सहज सिंगार किए बनिता चलीं मंगल बिपुल बनाई।
 गावहिं देहिं असीस मुदित, चिर जिवौ तनय सुखदाई।।7
 बीथिन्ह कुंकुम-कीच, अरगजा अगर अबीर उड़ाई।
 नाचहिं पुर-नर-नारि प्रेम भरि देहदसा बिसराई।।8 [1/4-8]

Verse no. 1/ 4-8—On hearing the birth of a son, King Dasrath called all the priests, elders and Brahmins, and performed all the rituals as prescribed by the Vedas [4]. Saints, bards and priests are chanting various Veda-mantra in the royal palace. Countless melodious songs of praises are being sung, and the citizens are donating liberally [5]. Many gates studded with gems, and countless flags, buntings and banners have been erected to decorate the city. At all the places, professional singers are singing the praises of the King and the Lord [6]. The women-folk are arriving in their best of attires, and blessing

the child for a happy and prosperous future [7]. Coloured powder is being sprinkled liberally on the streets. The citizen are dancing and making merry; they have lost all awareness (inhibitions) of their bodies [8].

The Naming Ceremony of Lord Ram and his three brothers: Ram Charit Manas

नामकरन कर अवसरु जानी। भूप बोलि पठए मुनि ग्यानी॥
 करि पूजा भूपति अस भाषा। धरिअ नाम जो मुनि गुनि राखा॥
 सो सुख धाम राम अस नामा। अखिल लोक दायक बिश्रामा॥
 बिस्व भरन पोषन कर जोई। ताकर नाम भरत अस होई॥
 जाके सुमिरन तें रिपु नासा। नाम सत्रुहन बेद प्रकासा॥ [Chaupai lines 1/197/2-3,6-8]
 दोहा- लच्छन धाम राम प्रिय सकल जगत आधार ।
 गुरु वसिष्ठ तेहि राखा लछिमन नाम उदार ॥ [Doha 1/197.]

When the time came for assigning names to the divine children as per set tradition, King Dasrath called his Guru Vashistha and requested him to give auspicious names to the four brothers which he has thought of and decided for them (2-3).

Hence, Vashistha gave the eldest son the name of 'Ram'—for he is an abode of bliss and a provider of comfort, peace, shelter, succour and solace to the entire world (6). The second son was named 'Bharat'—for he sustains and supports the world (7), and the third was called 'Shatrughan'—the very remembrance of whose name would vanquish all enemies (8). Finally, the fourth son was named 'Laxman'—he is an abode of all noble virtues and characters, is most dear to and the beloved of Lord Ram, is the mainstay and the foundation of the universe, and is very magnanimous and gracious (1/197). [Chaupai lines 1/197/2-3, 6-8, Doha 197.]

Geetawali : Verse no. 1/6/1-4, 18, 20, 25, 27—

बाजत अवध गहागहे अनंद-बधाए।
 नामकरन रघुबरनिके नृप सुदिन सोधाए॥1
 पाय रजायसु रायको ऋषिराज बोलाए।
 सिध्य-सचिव-सेवक-सखा सादर सिर नाए॥2
 साधु सुमति समरथ सबै सानंद सिखाए।
 जल, दल, फल, मनि-मूलिका, कुलि काज लिखाए॥3
 गनप-गौरि-हर पूजिकै गोबृन्द दुहाए।
 घर-घर मुद मंगल महा गुन-गान सुहाए॥4
 बाल बिलोकि अथरबणी हँसि हरहि जनायो।
 सुभको सुभ, मोद मोदको, 'राम' नाम सुनायो॥18
 जोहि, जानि, जपि, जोरिकै करपुट सिर राखे।
 'जय जय जय करुनानिधे !' सादर सुर भाषे॥20
 भरत लषन रिपुदवनहूँ धरे नाम बिचारी।

फलदायक फल चारिके दसरथ-सुत चारी॥25
 सुफल मनोरथ बिधि किये सब बिधि सबहीके।
 अब होइहै गाए सुने सबके तुलसीके॥27 [1/6/1-4, 18, 20,25,27]

Verse no. 1/6/1-4, 18, 20, 25, 27—The celebrations are continuing at Ayodhya with the singing of endless melodious songs sung to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. The King found out the proper date (after consulting astrologers) on which the naming ceremony should be held (1). On receiving instructions (royal request) from Dasrath, sage Vashistha called his disciples, ministers (of the court) servants and friends (2) and asked them to make preparations for the Naming Ceremony—and it included collecting holy waters from different sources (such as the holy rivers, lakes, pilgrim sites etc.), leaves of the sacred Tulsi plants amongst others, fruits of different kinds (such as mangoes, coconut and other fruits), seeds of the radish plant to act as beads for Navgraha worship, and other such paraphernalia required for the religious ceremony (3). Lord Ganesh, Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva were worshipped and milk-giving cows were milked, while various felicitous songs were sung in each household of the city (4).

Sage Vashistha, who was an expert in Atharva Veda, smiled at the child and told Lord Shiva, "This child is your Lord" (whom you worship), and saying this he named the child—who was a repository of all that was good, fortunate, auspicious, holy, divine and blissful—as 'Ram' (18).

Lord Shiva (on being thus informed by Vashistha) brought his hands near child Ram to bless him; and all the collected Gods chanted in unison 'Glory to the benevolent Lord' (20).

Sage Vashistha then named the other three brothers as 'Bharat', 'Laxman' and 'Shatrughan'. All these four sons (of king Dasrath) were so exalted and divine that the four grand fruits (rewards)¹ that a man gets for being righteous, honest, truthful and dutiful seem to derive their value and importance due to being blessed by them. (25).

The creator Brahma (Vidhata = the God who prescribes destiny) fulfilled all the desires of everyone. Even now, by chanting and singing the glory of those 4 brothers, all desires shall be fulfilled, says Tulsidas (27). [1/6/1-4,18,20,25,27]

[Note—¹The four 'fruits' are the rewards that a man gets for following the laws of auspicious living and for being righteous, dutiful and honest. These four fruits are (i) Artha—meaning financial prosperity and well-being, (ii) Dharma—the acclaim and rewards that accrue for observing the laws of propriety, probity, righteousness and up-righteousness), (iii) Kaam—meaning fulfillment of all desires, and (iv) Moksha—meaning emancipation and salvation.]

{Sage Vashistha was the chief priest of king Dasrath. He was a wise man and a son of the creator Brahma. He knew who Lord Ram actually was. So one day he made the following prophesy.}

Guru Vashistha's Prophecies:

Geetawali: Raag Dhanashree—Verse no. 1/16—

या सिसुके गुन नाम—बड़ाई।
 को कहि सकै, सुनहु नरपति, श्रीपति समान प्रभुताई॥ 1॥
 जद्यपि बुधि, बय, रूप, सील, गुन समै चारु चार्यो भाई।
 तदपि लोक—लोचन—चकोर—ससि राम भगत—सुखदाई॥ 2॥
 सुर, नर, मुनि करि अभय, दनुज हति, हरहि, धरनि गरुआई।
 कीरति बिमल बिस्व—अघमोचनि रहिहि सकल जग छाई॥ 3॥
 याके चरन—सरोज कपट तजि जे भजिहैं मन लाई।
 ते कुल जुगल सहित तरिहैं भव, यह न कछू अधिकाई॥ 4॥
 सुनि गुरबचन पुलक तन दंपति, हरष न हृदय समाई।
 तुलसिदास अवलोकि मातु—मुख प्रभु मनमें मुसुकाई॥ 5॥

Verse no. 1/16—'Oh king, listen! Who can describe (or prophesize) about the grand virtues, the eclectic qualities, the various divine names and the glories or the specialties of this child (Ram)? His majesty, fame and greatness is no less than that of Laxmi-pati himself. [Laxmi-pati refers to Lord Vishnu who is the divine husband of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.] (1).

Though all the four brothers are equal in their virtues of unmatched wisdom, intelligence, age, beauty, charm, character, noble qualities and other such grand virtues, yet Lord Ram, who gives happiness and delight to his devotees, is special amongst them just like the full moon is for the eyes of the bird called Chakor (Indian red-legged partridge) representing the creatures of the entire world. [This bird is believed to be so enamoured of the full moon that when this moon rises in the sky, the bird keeps its gaze fixed on it. The same bird pays no heed to the moon either one day before or after the full-moon night, though the difference between these three nights is almost negligible and imperceptible. In the present context of this stanza it means that just like this bird Chakor that devotes its attention exclusively to the moon on the full-moon night though the brilliance of the moon one day before and after this particular night is almost the same for all practical purposes, the creatures of this world look up to Lord Ram as their only saviour and protector though all the other three brothers too have the same qualities as much as Lord Ram. All the four brothers are equally charming and virtuous, but like the full moon Lord Ram stands out amongst them.] (2).

Lord Ram will make the Gods, the humans, the sages, the seers and the hermits etc. fearless by slaying (i.e. completely eliminating) the demons (who have been endlessly tormenting these pious and humble souls without rhyme or reason). This deed of the Lord would help him to remove the burden of this world (for which he has incarnated himself in the first place). His magnificent fame and stupendous glory as the one who eliminates sins, evils, vices, perversions and other misdemeanours of the entire world will spread in all the directions (3).

Those who would worship him (Lord Ram) and concentrate their mind and heart on his holy feet with honesty and sincerity (i.e. have complete devotion for and faith in the Lord) would not only be able to cross this world themselves but would also be empowered to do the same for their kith and kin such as all the members of the family of

their father and mother up and down the line—there is no doubt and wonder in it'. [That is, they would become so pious and holy that anyone coming in contact with them would become equally blessed by their grace. All their past ancestors and all the members of their current generation would benefit from the Lord's grace.] (4).'

Hearing these words of profound importance said by the Guru (Vashistha), the parents (of Lord Ram and his brothers) were thrilled and excited; a sense of immense contentedness, joy and delight surged in their hearts and overwhelmed them. Tulsidas says that when the Lord (Sri Ram) saw the happy face of his mother (Kaushalya) at that moment, he too smiled and felt happy in his heart¹. (5)

[Note—¹The Lord is very merciful and loving. Though his present physical form was that of a child, he in reality was the Father of the whole creation. So his smiling has two connotations here—he smiled because of the power of Maya or delusions that led his worldly mother Kaushalya to believe that Ram was her child instead of understanding the fact that he was no one's child but rather the Supreme Father of creation, and the second reason for the smile was that the Lord feels very happy when his devotees and subjects are happy.

Remember: Kaushalya may appear on the face to be Ram's worldly mother in the present dispensation, because this is what she had wanted as a boon from the Supreme Being when she had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) on some earlier occasion, but from the cosmic perspective of this creation she is just another creature and as much a subject of the kingdom of the Supreme Lord as others. So the Lord smiled at her delusions and ignorance. He also marveled at the phenomenal power of his own 'Maya Shakti', the cosmic power of the Lord to create delusions in this world and keep all the creatures enchanted by it.

The Lord was amused because if this Maya did not spare such an exalted soul as Kaushalya who was very privileged and occupied a specially high position amongst the Lord's devotees because of the simple fact that the Lord had agreed to come down to her place as her son and allowed her to life him in her arms, what will come of others who are ordinary mortals and not so privileged?

Why does the Lord create Maya in the first place? Well, it is necessary for him to do so to keep the wheel of creation, the wheel of birth and death, the wheel of deeds and their consequences, turning eternally. After all, it is 'he' and no one else who had set the wheel of creation rotating, and so he is himself responsible for its going on rotating endlessly. If Maya and its effects are removed, the whole world would cease to matter for the self-realised and enlightened creature who would be able to see the Truth behind this smokescreen of Maya.]

Childhood Pranks of Lord Ram: Ram Charit Manas

एहि बिधि सिसुबिनोद प्रभु कीन्हा। सकल नगरबासिन्ह सुख दीन्हा॥७
 लै उछंग कबहुँक हलरावै। कबहुँ पालनें घालि झुलावै॥८ [1/200/7-8]
 एक बार जननी अन्हवाए। करि सिंगार पलनाँ पौढ़ाए॥९
 निज कुल इष्टदेव भगवाना। पूजा हेतु कीन्ह अस्नाना॥१०
 करि पूजा नैवेद्य चढ़ावा। आपु गई जहँ पाक बनावा॥११

बहुरि मातु तहवाँ चलि आई। भोजन करत देख सुत जाई।।4
 गै जननी सिसु पहिं भयभीता। देखा बाल तहाँ पुनि सूता।।5
 बहुरि आई देखा सुत सोई। हृदयँ कंप मन धीर न होई।।6
 इहाँ उहाँ दुइ बालक देखा। 7

[1/201/1-7]

One day, mother Kaushalya washed the child and adorned him (with clothes and ornaments). Then she put him in a cradle to go to sleep. She then bathed and worshipped the family deity and offered the latter food as Prasad (sanctified food that is offered to a deity), and then went away to the kitchen. On return she found child Ram partaking of the food offered to the deity. Stunned and dumbfounded, she rushed back to the nursery where she found that the child Ram was fast asleep in the cradle where she had put him earlier to sleep. Hurrying back to the worship-room, she found the child still eating. She was full of fear and was extremely perplexed at seeing the child at two places at the same time. [She perhaps thought that this is a bad omen as she must be seeing a ghost or some evil Spirit in the guise of Ram. This obviously caused immense consternation and anxiety in her mind. We have just above talked about 'Maya' and its effects. Well, this was Maya playing its tricks at its best!] [1/201/1-7]

बालचरित हरि बहुबिधि कीन्हा। अति अनंद दासन्ह कहँ दीन्हा।।1
 परम मनोहर चरित अपारा। करत फिरत चारिउ सुकुमारा।।4
 भोजन करत बोल जब राजा। नहिं आवत तजि बाल समाजा।।6
 कौसल्या जब बोलन जाई। ठुमुकु ठुमुकु प्रभु चलहिं पराई।।7 [1/203/1,4,6,7]

Sri Hari (Lord Ram) performed many enjoyable and cheerful deeds as a child playing around with his usual pranks which gave immense joy and happiness to the servants of the royal palace; they thoroughly enjoyed the playful activities of the child Ram (1). The four princes roamed about doing most enchanting deeds that spread cheer and happiness all around (4). When his father, king Dasrath, called him for dinner, he would not come to him because he was enjoying the company of his friends. When his mother Kaushalya would go to fetch him, he would run away trying to avoid her, and in the process he stumbled and toddled (6-7) [1/203/1,4,6,7]

दोहा- भोजन करत चपल चित इत उत अवसरु पाइ।
 भाजि चले किलकत मुख दधि ओदन लपटाइ।। [Doha 1/203.]

Even while eating his mind would be restless, and as soon as he got a chance he would run-away with a scream of delight, his mouth smeared with rice and curd (from the unfinished meal). [1/203/0]

बंधु सखा सँग लेहिं बोलाई। बन मृगया नित खेलहिं जाई।।1
 अनुज सखा सँग भोजन करहीं। मातु पिता अग्या अनुसरहीं।।4 [1/205/1,4]

Lord Ram would call his brothers and friends and go to the forest to hunt every day (1). He would eat his meals accompanied by his younger brothers and friends (i.e. he always shared his food with others). He was a very obedient child as he always followed the instructions of his parents (4) (1/205/1,4)

Kavitawali : Verse no. 1/4—

कबहुँ ससि मागत आरि करें कबहुँ प्रतिबिंब निहारि डरें।
 कबहुँ करताल बजाइकै नाचत मातु सबै मन मोद भरें॥1
 कबहुँ रिसिआइ कहैं हठिकै पुनि लेत सोई जेहि लागि अरें।
 अवधेस के बालक चारि सदा तुलसी-मन-मंदिर में बिहरें॥2 [1/4]

Verse no. 1/4—Sometimes child (Lord Sri) Ram becomes adamant to get the moon, sometimes he gets afraid at his own shadow. At other times he claps his hands joyously and dances in merriment, a sight at which all the mothers feel overwhelmed with joy (1). Then there are times when he yearns for a particular object, not relenting and letting anyone rest till the time he gets it. Tulsidas prays that all the four brothers should reside in his heart for ever. [Tulsidas enjoys the playful childhood days of his beloved Lord Ram, and is so enthralled and captivated by the charms of the Lord's child-like behaviour that he wishes that these scenes are permanently etched in his memory for ever, and that he should remain lost in their thoughts for all times to come, for as long as he lives.] (2).[1/4]

The beauty of Lord Ram as a child:

{The beauty of Lord Ram as a child has been succinctly described by Tulsidas in his Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 1-7, and in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 30. Now let us see how charming the Lord's physical form as a child was.}

Barvai Ramayan: Verse nos. 1-7—

बड़े नयन कुटि भृकुटी भाल बिसाल।
 तुलसी मोहत मनहि मनोहर बाल॥1॥

1-Tulsidas says that (the child Lord Sri Ram) has large (lotus-like) eyes, curved eyebrows, and a broad forehead. This (sight of this) charming child entralls the heart and mind.

कुंकुम तिलक भाल श्रुति कुंडल लोल।
 काकपच्छ मिलि सखि कस लसत कपोल॥2॥

2-[The palace women folk say—] 'Oh Friend! There is a Tilak Mark of saffron on his (Sri Ram's) forehead, the ears have ear-rings that always shaking (as the child moves his head), and how enchanting and attractive do the round (well formed, healthy, rosy,

robust) cheeks look along with the lock of curly hairs dangling over them. [The 'Tilak Mark' is an auspicious sign made on the forehead. It is usually made from a paste of sandalwood.]

भाल तिलक सर सोहत भौंह कमान ।
मुख अनुहरिया केवल चंद समान ।।3।।

3-The line of the Tilak Mark on the forehead (of Lord Ram as a child) looks as adorable as an arrow mounted on a bow represented by the curved eye-brows. [The Tilak Mark is made vertically from the mid point of the eyebrows just above the base of the nose, and goes up across the center of the forehead till the hairline. Since the eyebrows are curved, it resembles an arrow that is mounted on a bow.]

Only a full moon can be compared with his (Sri Ram's) beautiful face.

तुलसी बंक बिलोकनि मृदु मुसकानि ।
कस प्रभु नयन कमल अस कहाँ बखानि ।।4।।

4-Tulsidas says that Lord Ram pleasantly glances sideways at an angle, and he sports a sweet smile on his lips. How can I (dare to) compare his eyes with a lotus flower (because his fascinating eyes are perennially bewitching and charming whereas the lotus flowers shrivels in the night).

चढ़त दसा यह उतरत जात निदान ।
कहाँ न कबहुँ करकस भौ कमान ।।5।।

5-I shall never say that Lord Ram's eyebrows are like a stern and hard bow. This is because when the bow faces an enemy it becomes taught (because it is stringed and pulled to shoot the arrow), while it becomes flaccid and limp when at ease (i.e. when it is un-stringed). [This is not the case at all with the curved eyebrows of Lord Ram. For one, they do not mean any harm to anyone, not even an enemy, because the Lord is mercy personified. Second, the bow is made of a hard material, but the Lord's eyebrows are extremely soft, tender and supple. The curved eyebrow is regarded as more beautiful as compared to that which is straight.]

काम रूप सम तुलसी राम सरूप ।
को कबि समसरि करै परै भवकूप ।।6।।

6-Tulsidas wonders which poet is so foolish that he would dare to compare the beautiful, charming and peerless image of Sri Ram with that of Kamdeo-cupid, because this would be a show of grave incompetence on his part as well as a sinful act which will make him fall in the well represented by this mundane, deluding and entrapping world. [Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is incomparable and most holy and divine, while Kamdeo is synonymous with lust and passion. The Lord provides liberation and deliverance from the entanglements of this world, while Kamdeo cupid traps a person in the web of desires and yearnings. The beauty of the Lord has a divine, subtle and ethereal dimension, whereas the beauty of Kamdeo cupid is earthly and gross. So there is no comparison between the

two, though the Lord's charming image is often times compared to the beauty of Kamdeo cupid, but that is just to give the people an idea of the Lord's measureless beauty as the people do not have the ability to even imagine the dimension, the depth, the extent and intensity of the Lord's charm because the Lord and every element associated with him are beyond their comprehension.]

साधु सुसील सुमति सुचि सरल सुभाव ।
राम नीति रत काम कहा यह पाव ॥7॥

7-Lord Sri Ram is pure-hearted and pious (Sadhu), is most courteous, amiable, gentle and civilised, is wise and has noble and positive thoughts, is clean, auspicious and holy within and without (i.e. he has no deceit and conceit), and his nature and character are simple, noble and virtuous. Lord Ram is very diligent in following the path that is in accordance with the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility. Say, where can Kamdeo cupid ever imagine being a match for the Lord? Where can he ever find these immaculate and glorious qualities and virtues? [Refer verse no. 6.]

Geetawali: Raag Asawari— Verse no. 1/30—

छँगन मँगन अँगना खेलत चारु चार्यो भाई ।
सानुज भरत लाल लषन राम लोने लोने
लरिका लखि मुदित मातु समुदाई ॥1॥
बाल बसन भूषन धरे, नख-सिख छबि छाई ।
नील पीत मनसिज-सरसिज मंजुल
मालनि मानो है देहनि तें दुति पाई ॥2॥
ठुमुकु ठुमुकु पग धरनि, नटनि, लरखरनि सुहाई ।
भजनि, मिलनि, रूठनि, तूठनि, किलकनि,
अवलोकनि, बोलनि बरनि न जाई ॥3॥
जननि सकल चहुँ ओर आलबाल मनि-अँगनाई ।
दसरथ-सुकृत बिबुध-बिरवा बिलसत
बिलोकि जनु बिधि बर बारि बनाई ॥4॥
हरि बिरंचि हर हेरि राम प्रेम-परबसताई ।
सुख-समाज रघुराजके बरनत
बिसुद्ध मन सुरनि सुमन झरि लाई ॥5॥
सुमिरत श्रीरघुबरनिकी लीला लरिकाई ।
तुलसिदास अनुराग अवध आनंद
अनुभवत तब को सो अजहुँ अघाई ॥6॥

Verse no. 1/30—The four brothers (Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) are most beautiful (handsome) and adorable; they are exceptionally charming and very enchanting to behold as they play around in the royal court-yard. The mothers are overwhelmed with joy and filled with exhilaration when they see Shatrughan along with his brothers Bharat, Laxman and Ram. [Remarkable indeed! Wonderful really! Shatrughan was the youngest

of the four, and the youngest son is always most dear for any mother. The three elder brothers were also too eager to keep him happy, and so Shatrughan occupied the central stage when the four played together. He was the cynosure of all eyes so to say.] (1).

All the four brothers are adorned by clothes and ornaments befitting children of their exalted, noble and royal stature; they look absolutely fabulous, most radiant and very magnificent from head to toe. The garlands that Kamdeo-cupid had made from blue and yellow lotus-like flowers appear to derive their glamour, charm, beauty and magnificence from their (children's) bodies. [In other words, the four brothers looked so exceptionally beautiful that the beauty of the garland of flowers that Kamdeo held appeared to be only a fraction of their beauty. It looks as if the magnificence which the garland possessed is a mere reflection of the original magnificence effusing out of the bodies of these four brothers. The original always has the vibrancy, the colour, the energy, the eloquence and the dynamism that its reflection lacks.] (2).

No one can describe the beauty and charm of the divine sight of the children's strutting around with a staggering and uncertain gait, the sight of their dancing, stumbling, running forward and meeting each other, their becoming annoyed and angry on one occasion and happy and cheerful at another occasion, their giving out a shrill cry of joy, their gaze, and the enchantment of the hearing of their lisping speech and their childish babble (3).

Watching the Kalpa-Tree representing Dasrath's good and virtuous deeds grow rapidly in the garden representing the palace court-yard, the creator has enclosed it (to protect it) from all the four sides by making a hedge representing the mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra, Kaikeyi). [It's a fine example of imagery. The good deeds of king Dasrath have been personified in the form of the four brothers who are compared to a Kalpa Tree. This tree is the all wish-fulfilling tree of the Gods. The mothers are very protective of these four children and are always on the look out that no harm should come to them like a hedge is erected around a young tree to protect it against damage.] (4).

Observing the nature of Lord Ram that he can be very easily pleased, obliged, gratified and made happy (captivated and overcome) by having devotion, love and affection for him, the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu and the concluder Shiva (i.e. all the three chief Gods who form the Trinity) are liberal in praising king Dasrath because he has found a treasury of immense happiness and contentedness in the form of the Lord as his son. [Tulsidas means that the Gods praise the purity and sincerity of love and devotion of Dasrath for he has been able to please the Supreme Lord so much that the Lord came down personally to his palace as a son in the form of Sri Ram.] The Gods are so appreciative of the king's good fortune and his quality of love and devotion which forced the Supreme Lord to become a human child that they do not tire of showering flowers on him in a continuous stream to honour him and celebrate this auspicious virtue of the Lord himself. As a result, the Gods are showering flowers on him constantly (to celebrate it) (5).

Remembering and recalling those childhood pranks and playful activities of those four children who are the best in the clan of Raghu, Tulsidas feels enchanted and exhilarated, and experiences the ecstasy and joy of those days and moments even today in

Ayodhya. [Tulsidas had lived in the town of Ayodhya during his lifetime. What he means to say is that he remains so submerged in the pleasant thoughts of his dear Lord that he can imagine the same level of happiness and cheer all around even today in the city as it existed during the time of Lord Ram when he was a child playing around on its soil.] (6).

Ram as a child: Kavitawali : Verse no. 1/1—

अवधेसके द्वारे सकारें गई सुत गोद कै भूपति लै निकसे ।
अवलोकि हों सोच बिमोचनको ठगि-सी रही, जे न ठगे धिक-से ।।
तुलसी मन-रंजन रंजित-अंजन नैन सुखंजन-जातक-से ।
सजनी ससिमैं समसील उभै नवनील सरोरुह-से बिकसे ।।।।

Verse no. 1/1—[One maid talks with her companion] :- 'I had gone early morning to the palace gate of Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya. Just then, the king came out with his son in his arms. I was absolutely charmed, completely fascinated and enthralled at the sight of that divine child who is the eliminator of all sorrows. Those people who are not enamoured by this divine child and not thrilled at his sight are contemptible; they are to be treated as being most unfortunate and cursed. The edges of the child's eye-lids were smeared with 'Anjan' (a black, oily medicated paste usually used as a charm to ward off evil spirits), and his eyes were as beauteous and gorgeous as that of the 'Khanjan' bird's chick. Oh dear! Those eyes looked as if two equally beautiful blue-tinged lotuses have blossomed on the face of the moon!' [Here, the face of child Ram is likened to the moon, and his two beautiful eyes to the two lotus flowers.]

Kavitawali : Verse no. 1/2—

पग नूपुर औ पहुँची करकंजनि मंजु बनी मनिमाल हिउँ ।
नवनील कलेवर पीत झँगा झलकै पुलकै नृपु गोद लिएँ ।।
अरबिंदु सो आननु रूप मरंदु अनंदित लोचन-भृंग पिएँ ।
मनमो न बस्यौ अस बालकु जौ तुलसी जगमें फलु कौन जिएँ ।।२।।

Verse no. 1/2—"That child (Lord Ram) had a 'Ghungharoo' in his feet (a small ornament worn around the ankle and having tiny bells which chime when the foot is moved), a bracelet around his wrist, and a beautiful necklace of gems around his neck. A yellow frock adorned his dark complexion of pristine beauty. The king was thrilled and immensely pleased in having him in his arms. The child's face was like a lotus, and its divine sight amply rewarded the eyes of those who watched him without letting their gaze move away just like the black bee drinking nectar from the lotus flower and feeling extremely contented and fulfilled. (2)

Kavitawali : Verse no. 1/3—

तनकी दुति स्याम सरोरुह लोचन कंजकी मंजुलताई हरैं ।
अति सुंदर सोहत धूरि भरे छबि भूरि अनंगकी दूरि धरैं ।।

दमकैँ दँतियाँ दुति दामिनी-ज्यौँ किलकैँ कल बाल-बिनोद करैँ ।
अवधेसके बालक चारि सदा तुलसी-मन-मंदिरमें बिहरैँ ।।3।।

Verse no. 1/3— The complexion of his (child Ram's) body is like a blue-tinged lotus, and the eyes dulled the prettiness (loveliness, beauty or charm) of lotus in their comparison. He appears very pretty/lovely inspite of being covered in dust (because the child has been playing around in the ground of the palace), and the famed beautiful image of Kamdeo turns pale in comparison. His tiny teeth glitter and dazzle like lightening, and he playfully performs many child-like pranks with a giggle and mischief on his face. Tulsidas prays that all those four sons of King Dasrath of Ayodhya should reside for ever in his heart and mind.

Kavitawali : Verse no. 5—

बर दंतकी पंगति कुंदकली अधराधर-पल्लव खोलनकी ।
चपला चमकैँ घन बीच जगैँ छबि मोतिन माल अमोलनकी ।।
घुँघुरारि लटैँ लटकैँ मुख ऊपर कुंडल लोल कपोलनकी ।
नेवछावरि प्रान करै तुलसी बलि जाउँ लला इन बोलनकी ।।5।।

Verse no. 5— The combined effect of the child Ram's row of white glistening teeth that resemble the Kunda-kalis (buds of a conical tiny flowers that are white in colour), the opening of his lips (as he smiles), and the necklace of priceless pearls that he is adorned with create an image similar to the dazzle of lightening in black clouds. [The child is dark complexioned like the dark rain-bearing clouds. The white teeth glisten inside the lips like lightening showing in the dark cloud, and the pearl necklace adds to or multiplies the shining effect.] Curly hairs are dangling on his face.

Tulsidas says, 'Oh Lalla! [It is an affectionate form of address for a child.] I am overwhelmed and offer to sacrifice my self at the pretty sight of your beautiful face that is adorned by the magnificent ear rings which dangle down to the cheeks, as well as at your enchanting child-like talk (i.e. at your child-like giggle, babble, lisping and banter).

Kavitawali : Verse no.1/6—

पदकंजनि मंजु बनीं पनहीं धनुही सर पंकज-पानि लिएँ ।
लरिका सँग खेलत डोलत हैं सरजू-तट चौहट हाट हिएँ ।।
तुलसी अस बालक-सौं नहिं नेहु कहा जप जोग समाधि किएँ ।
नर वे खर सूकर स्वान समान कहौ जगमें फलु कौन जिएँ ।।6।।

Verse no. 1/6—Attractive shoes adorn his (the child Ram's) feet, a tiny bow and arrow is in his small hands, and accompanied by children (of his age), he playfully moves about either on the banks of the river Saryu or the market places of Ayodhya. Tulsidas says that if one cannot develop love and affection towards such children, then what is the utility of doing Japa (reciting and repetition of the Mantras), practicing Yoga (meditation and concentration on the Pure-Self) or being in a state of Samadhi (a trance like state of consciousness when one is lost in deep contemplation)? Such people (who do all these exercises but cannot inculcate love and devotion for the Lord) are similar to donkeys,

pigs and dogs. Say, of what use is their life (i.e. what fruit or benefit have they got from taking birth)¹? (6).

[Note—¹This verse must be seen in the correct light and not misinterpreted as casting aspersions on or in any way demeaning to the institution or the system of doing Japa, Yoga or Samadhi. The main objective of these three latter exercises is to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance, to find emancipation and salvation, to acquire tranquility and peace for the soul, to have access to the Supreme Being and find the Absolute Truth of existence in the form of the pure Consciousness. Such exercises require a lot of effort, they are time consuming, and strict laws and regulations must be followed rigidly to achieve success in them. A smallest deviation or carelessness makes the whole exercise go in vain.

Besides this, they require a follower to concentrate his mind and attention on something that is too abstract for an ordinary man, something that is not easily verifiable or seen—because the cosmic Consciousness, the pure ‘Self’, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Atma or Soul on which one is required to focus one’s attention are abstract entities too difficult to grasp and understand. This conception is beyond the understanding of an ordinary man, and so when the objective is not clear the path too becomes hazardous and uncertain.

Therefore, the exercises of doing Japa, Yoga and Samadhi in order to attain the Supreme Being and find emancipation and salvation are limited to a few highly enlightened souls and to those who are well-versed in the intricacies of the metaphysical philosophy of the scriptures. Therefore there are too difficult for an ordinary man to access. On the contrary, having love and devotion for the Lord’s known form and his charming image which is like that of a pretty child one sees around him in this world makes the path leading to peace and happiness of the soul as well as its emancipation and salvation very easy and light on the mind and the senses. It is very easy to relate to something that we see and experience everyday in our lives around us than to attempting to focus our mind on something that we cannot even comprehend.

Therefore, Tulsidas advocates the easier path of having love and devotion for the human form of the Supreme Lord as Ram instead of following the path that is arduous and time consuming and uncertain of yielding tangible results.

When we read the Holy Bible we come across the following declaration of Jesus Christ in the *Gospel of St. Matthew*, 18/1-6—1: At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2: And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3: And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4: Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5: And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6: But whose shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Gospel of St. Mark, 9/36-37—36: And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37:

Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.]

Ram at Play: Geetawali: Raag Thori—Verse no. 1/45—

राम—लषन इक ओर, भरत—रिपुदवन लाल इक ओर भये।
 सरजुतीर सम सुखद भूमि—थल, गनि—गनि गोइयाँ बाँटि लये॥ 1॥
 कंदुक—केलि—कुसल हय चढ़ि—चढ़ि, मन कसि—कसि ठोकि—ठोकि खये।
 कर—कमलनि बिचित्र चौगानै, खेलन लगे खेल रिझये॥ 2॥
 ब्योम बिमाननि बिबुध बिलोकत खेलक पेखक छाँह छये।
 सहित समाज सराहि दसरथहि बरषत निज तरु—कुसुम—चये॥ 3॥
 एक लै बढत एक फेरत, सब प्रेम—प्रमोद—बिनोद—मये।
 एक कहत भइ हार रामजूकी, एक कहत भइया भरत जये॥ 4॥
 प्रभु बकसत गज बाजि, बसन—मनि, जय धुनि गगन निसान हये।
 पाइ सखा—सेवक जाचक भरि जनम न दुसरे द्वार गये॥ 5॥
 नभ—पुर परति निछावरि जहँ तहँ, सुर—सिद्धनि बरदान दये।
 भूरि—भाग अनुराग उमगि जे गावत—सुनत चरित नित ये॥ 6॥
 हारे हरष होत हिय भरतहि, जिते सकुच सिर नयन नये।
 तुलसी सुमिरि सुभाव—सील सुकृती तेइ जे एहि रंग रए॥ 7॥

Verse no. 1/45—[This verse narrates one occasion when the four brothers were playing.]

On the one side were Lord Ram and Laxman, and on the other side were Bharat and Shatrughan. They stood on a flat ground at a place on the banks of river Saryu that was very pleasant. Then they counted themselves and formed two groups among themselves (1).

Then, fully prepared to play, the four brothers mounted well trained Polo-horses, tied their turbans, tucked in their curls (of hairs) in it, and started to play the game of Polo (2).

The Gods are watching the game astride their vehicles from the sky (heavens), and are providing shade to both the players as well as the spectators. The Gods praise Dasrath along with his retinue (i.e. his kinsmen, relatives, ministers, subjects, servants etc.), and shower on them garlands made of flowers of the Kalpa-Tree. [That is, the Gods honour them for their exceptional good luck that they are able to watch a match being played by the Supreme Lord himself in his human manifestation as Lord Ram and his brothers.] (3).

All the children are engrossed in enjoying themselves. They are exuding happiness, cheer, ecstasy, bonhomie and love in their expressions and demeanours. When the boys of one group move forward with the ball, those in the opposite group repulse them (i.e. return the ball back to them). Some claim that Lord Ram has lost (the game), while others assert that brother Bharat has won. [It is actually Lord Ram voluntarily losing the game so that his dear brother Bharat wins it. He is so magnanimous, gracious, benevolent and kind that he prefers to lose and make Bharat win so that the latter can smile and feel happy. Lord Ram derives great satisfaction and pleasure when he sees others happy even if it means that he has to forego his own comfort and honour by letting

his opponent have the upper hand and win the trophy and be successful in any endeavour. Happiness of Bharat and the smile on his face at winning the game gave the Lord more peace and contentedness than a momentary glory and applaud from the spectators if he had won the match himself. This remarkable character of the Lord made him very dear to his subjects later on in life—he would rather suffer himself than do anything that made others unhappy.] (4).

The Lord (Sri Ram) allows elephants, horses, clothes and gems of various kinds to be given to them (the winning group) as reward. Kettledrums are being played in the heavens by the Gods who celebrate the victory. They sit in their vehicles in the sky and applaud, saying ‘Glory to the Lord; Hail, Hail!’ [It is very interesting to note here that though it is not mentioned explicitly who the Gods were lauding, applauding and hailing, the obvious answer is that is Lord Ram. As has been stressed in this verse above, this unique character of the Lord of losing himself and let others win is a grand character that the Gods appreciate. Usually children fight each other for victory, and the losing party sulks and makes a bad face. But Lord Ram is cheerful and exuberant at Bharat and his companions’ victory!] After being rewarded by Lord Ram, the companions, friends, servants and alms-seekers did not (find it necessary to) go to anybody else’s door ever again throughout their lives. [The Lord gave so much to them that they found no reason to want anything more in their lives any longer. The broad implication of this statement is that if one seeks something from Lord Ram, the seeker is so amply rewarded and satisfied that he never needs to seek anything, any more and any longer in this life.] (5).

At various places in the city, abundant gifts in the form of countless charities and felicitous offerings are showering like a rain from the sky, while the Gods and mystics are giving away their blessings liberally. Those who affectionately sing or hear these divine childhood activities of Lord Ram (and his brothers) daily, deeds enacted by the Lord that are always fresh and new, are indeed very fortunate and privileged (6).

Bharat feels glad when he loses the game while his head and eyes are lowered by hesitation and modesty on winning it. [But Lord Ram always ensures that Bharat wins the game instead! It is so fascinating and heart-warming to read this particular stanza. There appears to be a competition between the two brothers, not to show who is more skilled in the game but to ensure defeat for himself so that the other brother wins! Bharat is glad when he loses the game because he then has had a chance to oblige his loving brother Lord Ram to hog the limelight at least for once, and to repay Ram’s gesture of graciousness by making him win for once. Lord Ram allows this to happen once in a while because when he starts losing continuously and lets Bharat win, the Lord sees pain in Bharat’s face instead of pleasure. Why? Because Bharat realises that the Lord has lost a round of the game voluntarily just to let him win. Since the intention of Lord Ram is to see Bharat happy, this regret showing on Bharat’s face makes Ram win an occasional round so that his victory can cheer Bharat. It also helps to make it appear that the game is being played honestly, and it also keeps the companions of Bharat happy that that had won at least some of the rounds. At the end of the day the things are so managed by the merciful Lord that no one wins or loses in the final reckoning and the game ends in a draw. How marvelous and fantastic a show of brotherly love and the ideal of compassion and the spirit of give-and-take that this verse presents to us.]

Tulsidas says that those who are submerged in the thoughts of such graceful virtues of the Lord, those who imbrued in this magnificent colour of brotherly love and

affection (i.e. those who have inculcated these virtues in themselves) by remembering such generous, magnanimous and compassionate characters of the Lord which are natural to him and part of natural temperament and habit, such people are indeed very privileged, fortunate and lucky in all respects (7).

Lord Ram Returns Home after Play:

Geetawali: Verse no. 1/46—

खेलि खेल सुखेलनिहारे।
 उतरि उतरि, चुचुकारि तुरंगनि, सादर जाइ जोहारे॥ 1॥
 बंधु-सखा-सेवक सराहि, सनमानि सनेह सँभारे।
 दिये बसन-गज-बाजि साजि सुभ साज सुभाँति सँवारे॥ 2॥
 मुदित नयन-फल पाइ, गाइ गुन सुर सानंद सिधारे।
 सहित समाज राजमंदिर कहँ राम राउ पगु धारे॥ 3॥
 भूप-भवन घर-घर घमंड कल्यान कोलाहल भारे।
 निरखि हरषि आरती-निछावरि करत सरीर बिसारे॥ 4॥
 नित नए मंगल-मोद अवध सब, सब बिधि लोग सुखारे।
 तुलसी तिन्ह सम तेउ जिन्हके प्रभुतेँ प्रभु-चरित पियारे॥ 5॥

Verse no. 1/46— The players, having finished their games, dismounted from their horses, patted them (the horses) affectionately, and bowed before Lord Ram in his honour (1).

The Lord praised and showed his brothers, friends and servants due respect, expressed his affection for them, and gifted them many types of clothes as well as numerous horses and elephants decked up (decorated) with beautiful decorations (2).

Thereafter, the Gods, being extremely glad, happy and pleased, and having got the fruits (reward, benefit) of their eyes (i.e. having had the opportunity of witnessing such a marvelous and fascinating game-playing scene of the Lord), went to their respective abodes in the heavens, all the while singing his glories en-route. Lord Ram too departed for his royal palace from the playing field, along with his companions (3).

There is tumultuous rejoicing in the palace as well as in every household of the city. Seeing him (Lord Ram) affectionately, the mothers have literally lost awareness of their bodies (i.e. they have forgotten about their own self because they are hugely excited and happy). They perform the Aarti of the Lord and his brothers with an exhilarated and cheerful mind. The mothers are liberally giving away alms and charities in abundance. [The Aarti is a form of ceremonial welcome home when lighted oil lamps are arranged on a plate and shown to the visitor as a mark of auspiciousness.] (4).

In this way, there are fresh celebrations and rejoicings in Ayodhya on a daily basis. Tulsidas asserts that those who have greater affection for the Lord's divine stories and the equally divine activities and deeds that the Lord performed in this world than the Lord himself are very fortunate, and they are equally privileged to those ordinary citizens of Ayodhya who may not have had the opportunity to come too near or close to the Lord himself personally but had exulted and remained drowned in the Lord's glory and affections for them. [This observation must be read in the context of verse no. 45 wherein

it is described how the Lord preferred to lose himself to make his brother Bharat win the game so that his victory could make him happy. The idea is that it is very important to remain submerged in the ocean of the Lord's mercy and grace which is available to all free of cost at all times of their lives, wherever they are in whatever situation they may be. The physical form of the Supreme Being as Lord Ram had to obey the established laws of creation—for the simple reason that these laws are established by none else but the Lord himself—and Lord Ram had to leave this world when the time came, but his divine name, his divine glory, his divine story and his divine Spirit lives eternally for us in our midst to let us bask in their sun-shine.] (5).

Kavitawali : Verse no. 1/7—

सरजू बर तीरहिं तीर फिरैं रघुबीर सखा अरु बीर सबै ।
धनुही कर तीर, निषंग कसैं कटि पीत दुकूल नवीन फबै ।।
तुलसी तेहि औसर लावनिता दस चारि नौ तीन इकीस सबै ।
मति भारति पंगु भई जो निहारि बिचारि फिरी उपमा न पबै ।।7।।

Verse no. 1/7— Lord Ram, his friends and brothers roam about playfully on the banks of river Saryu. His hands hold a small bow and arrow, the quiver is tied around his hip, and a new Pitambar (a yellow coloured seamless silk cloth wrapped around the body as an over-garment) adorns his body. Tulsidas says that Sri Sharda (the goddess of speech, wisdom, intellect; also known as Saraswati) could not find anything to compare with this beauty and enchanting image of the Lord though she searched for it in all the fourteen Bhuvans (the 14 worlds that constitute this creation), nine Khands (the nine divisions or parts into which these worlds have been divided), the three Lokas (the 3 nearer worlds) and the twenty-one Brahamaands (universes). So she became frustrated (as she could not find anything as beauteous, as magnificent, as majestic and as fabulous as this image of Lord Ram in the whole of creation).

Education: Ram Charit Manas

भए कुमार जबहिं सब भ्राता । दीन्ह जनेऊ गुरु पितु माता ।।3
गुरुगृहँ गए पढ़न रघुराई । अल्प काल बिद्या सब आई ।।4
जाकी सहज स्वास श्रुति चारी । सो हरि पढ़ यह कौतुक भारी ।।5 [1/204/3-5]

When all the (four) brothers attained boyhood, they were given the 'Sacred Thread' by their teacher (Vashistha) and their parents (3). Thereafter, they went to Vashistha's hermitage for education, and in a short time they mastered all knowledge. [That is, after their initiation by the sacred thread ceremony, they went to study at the hermitage of the teacher Guru Vashistha. They quickly learnt all that was taught to them; they became experts sooner than expected.] (4). What a wonder that Sri Hari (an epithet for Lord Vishnu), whose breath is the reservoir of all the four Vedas, should study (like an ordinary child)!¹ (5) [1/204/3-5]

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is regarded in the Purans as the Supreme Being. Lord Ram is an incarnation of Vishnu. The Vedas are the primary scriptures and a repository

of all available knowledge in existence. Being the Supreme Lord of creation, Vishnu is obviously the one who must have created even the Vedas. These scriptures are called his breath because originally the Vedas used to be chanted and transmitted orally—hence the reference to the ‘breath’ because speaking is also done through the same windpipe by which one breathes, and also because only a man who breathes can speak, and therefore recite and teach the Vedas. ‘Breath’ is metaphor for life. Since Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Tulsidas expresses his astonishment that the Lord had to pass through the normal process of education and learning the Vedas though he is the one who had created these scriptures. See Glossary in appendix no. 2 at the end of this book.]

{There is a sweet verse in the Barvai Ramayan that says that one day when the little boy Ram picked up a reed to make a bow out of it, his father king Dasrath was watching. He felt pleased and got a small bow made for him.}

Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 8—

सीक धनुष हित सिखन सकुचि प्रभु लीन ।
मुदित माँगि इक धनुही नृप हँसि दीन ॥ 8 ॥

8-Once, the child (Lord Sri Ram, being born in the warrior race known as ‘Kshatriya’) picked up a reed or a long blade of grass with great hesitation to make a bow out of it and learn archery. [His father king Dasrath was watching.] Seeing this, the king got a small bow made especially for him, and gave it to him smilingly.

[Sri Ram's hesitation indicates that he did not wish to pick up something or learn an art which would kill others or harm them. But he had no choice, because for one, he was born as a Kshatriya which is a warrior class, and second but most important reason was that he had to slay the demons and get the earth freed from their torments, for which arms were necessary.]

{Now we move on to the next phase in the Lord's life on earth. There was a great sage named Vishwamitra. His fire sacrifice was continuously defiled by the demons. He had heard that the Supreme Being had manifested as Lord Ram in the kingdom of Ayodhya with the express purpose of eliminating these ferocious and sinful demons. So the sage decided to bring the Lord to his hermitage and let the Lord begin his job for which he had taken the trouble of becoming a human being.}

Arrival of Vishwamitra: Ram Charit Manas

बिस्वामित्र महामुनि ग्यानी । बसहिं बिपिन सुभ आश्रम जानी ॥ 2
जहँ जप जग्य जोग मुनि करहीं । अति मारीच सुबाहुहि डरहीं ॥ 3
देखत जग्य निसाचर धावहिं । करहिं उपद्रव मुनि दुख पावहिं ॥ 4
तब मुनिबर मन कीन्ह बिचारा । प्रभु अवतरेउ हरन महि भारा ॥ 6
एहँ मिस देखौं पद जाई । करि बिनती आनौं दोउ भाई ॥ 7 [1/206/2-4, 6-7]

The enlightened sage Vishwamitra lived at a holy spot in a forest where he did penance, fire sacrifices, meditation and contemplation, but he was afraid of the demons Marich and Subhau (2-3). As soon as these demons saw the sacrificial fire, they would rush and desecrate (defile) it, which caused great chagrin to Vishwamitra (4). So he decided that he would go and fetch Sri Hari (Lord Ram) who had already taken birth for the purpose of getting the earth rid of the burden of demons (6-7). [1/206/2-4, 6-7]

दोहा- देहु भूप मन हरषित तजहु मोह अग्यान।
धर्म सुजस प्रभु तुम्ह कौ इन्ह कहँ अति कल्यान।। [Doha 1/207.]

Reaching the court of King Dasrath, he pleaded with him to give Lord Ram and Sri Laxman to him for the purpose of slaying the demons. He urged the king not to let wordly love and ignorance (of the true nature of Lord Ram) come in the way; he would earn religious fame and great merit, and the two princes would be blessed (for serving a noble cause) [1/207/0].

सब सुत प्रिय मोहि प्रान कि नाई। राम देत नहिं बनइ गोसाईं।।5
तब बसिष्ट बहुबिधि समुझावा। नृप संदेह नास कहँ पावा।।8
दोहा- सौंपे भूप रिषिहि सुत बहुबिधि देइ असीस। [Chaupai lines 1/208/5,8, Doha 208 Ka]

King Dasrath was shocked at this demand, and he was most reluctant to part with Lord Ram because all his sons were very dear to him like his very own life (5). Then his teacher sage Vashistha pleaded with him, explaining all the pros and cons, thereby removing all his doubts (8). So, the king handed over Lord Ram and Sri Laxman to sage Vishwamitra after blessing them. [Chaupai lines 1/208/5,8, Doha 208 Ka]

[Note—How the king's misgivings and doubts were removed are narrated below in the following verses.]

Geetawali : Verse no. 1/47—

चहत महामुनि जाग जयो।
नीच निसाचर देत दुसह दुख, कृस तनु ताप तयो।। 1
सापे पाप, नये निदरत खल, तब यह मंत्र ठयो।
बिप्र-साधु-सुर-धेनु-धरनि-हित हरि अवतार लयो।। 2
सुमिरत श्रीसारंगपानि छनमें सब सोच गयो।
चले मुदित कौसिक कोसलपुर, सगुननि साथ दयो।। 3 [1/47/1-3]

Verse no. 1/47—Sage Vishwamitra wishes to complete his fire-sacrifice, but the demons interfere, molest and desecrate it continuously with great impunity, as a result of which the sage is getting emaciated due to worry (1). He is in a dilemma. If he curses the demons, that will be sinful (because getting angry and cursing is not becoming of a saint of Vishwamitra's stature, and especially when he has taken a vow of remaining calm and

observing austerity and penance while engaged in the fire sacrifice). And if he tolerates them, there seem to be no end to the demon's torments. So he thought to himself—‘Sri Hari has taken a form (as an incarnation of Lord Ram) for the benefit of the Brahmins, the sages and hermits, the pious ones, the Gods, the holy cows and the mother earth.’ (I must therefore approach him to liberate me from this daily suffering at the hands of demons) (2).

Thinking thus, he was delighted, and proceeded towards Ayodhya eagerly. At this time, there were many good omens (to indicate to him that his visit would be fruitful) (3). [1/47/1-3]

Geetawali : Verse no. 1/50—

राजन ! राम-लषन जो दीजै ।
जस रावरो, लाभ ढोटनिहूँ, मुनि सनाथ सब कीजै ।। 1
डरपत हौ साँचे सनेह-बस सुत-प्रभाव बिनु जाने ।
बूझिय बामदेव अरु कुलगुरु, तुम पुनि परम सयाने ।। 2
रिपु रन दलि, मख राखि, कुसल अति अलप दिननि घर ऐहैं ।
तुलसिदास रघुबंस-तिलक की कबिकुल कीरति गैहैं ।। 3 [1/50/1-3]

Verse no. 1/50— Pleading with King Dasrath to give Lord Ram to him (Vishwamitra), he says ‘Oh King, if you give Lord Ram and Sri Laxman to me, not only will you get good fame but these two divine brothers would also greatly benefit from it (i.e. they would also acquire immense fame; their great deeds would make them renowned throughout the world) (1). You are afraid to give them to me because you do not know their true nature, qualities or qualifications, so you should consult Baamdeo and your court/family preacher sage Vashistha (2). They (Lord Ram and Sri Laxman) would slay the demons and protect my fire-sacrifice, and then they would soon come back to Ayodhya.’ Tulsidas adds from his side, saying—‘Oh king! If you do so, the poets and bards will sing the glories and praises of Lord Ram and Sri Laxman for all times to come.’¹ (3). [50/1-3]

[Note—¹The last stanza can be read as follows also—Tulsidas says that the sage told the king further—Oh king! If you pay heed to my advice then the praises and glories of the two brothers would be sung by poets and bards for eternity.]

Geetawali : Verse no. 1/51—

रहे ठगिसे नृपति सुनि मुनिबरके बयन ।
कहि न सकत कछु राम-प्रेमबस, पुलक गात, भरे नीर नयन ।। 1 ।।
गुरु बसिष्ठ समुझाय कह्यो तब हिय हरषाने, जाने सेष-सयन ।
सौंपे सुत गहि पानि, पाँय परि, भूसुर उर चले उमँगि चयन ।। 2 ।।
तुलसी प्रभु जोहत पोहत चित, सोहत मोहत कोटि मयन ।
मधु-माधव-मूरति दोउ संग मानो दिनमनि गवन कियो उतर अयन ।। 3 ।।

Verse no. 1/51—Hearing Vishwamitra's words, the king (Dasrath) became dumbfounded and stunned. Overcome by love for Sri Ram, he could not say a word. His body became numbed and tears welled-up in his eyes (1).

Then Guru Vashistha consoled him, reassuring him that he should not at all be worried by explaining the reality of the things to him.

[That is, the sage enlightened the king that his son Ram is no ordinary prince, but he is the Supreme Being himself incarnate, and that his main objective of coming to the earth is getting rid of the demons. The king himself is a very righteous and holy man, and he has always fought for upholding the laws of Dharma—the laws of righteousness and correct behaviour. He has often in the past fought on the side of the Gods against their enemies. Now therefore he should not be a hindrance in the work of the Gods by being sentimental and too obsessive with a physical form of the Lord as his child. Rather, he should willingly tell Ram and Laxman to accompany sage Vishwamitra so that the noble objective of the Lord's incarnation is fulfilled. He should not act childish and in a worldly manner.]

As a result (of this advice and wisdom imparted to him by his teacher and advisor sage Vashistha), the king realised the true nature of Lord Ram as being an incarnation (manifestation) of the Lord God (Vishnu) who reclines on the legendry Sheshnath (the legendary celestial serpent) on the cosmic ocean of milk known as the Kshir Sagar. So he felt extremely glad and honoured in his heart (at being fortunate enough to become the Lord's worldly father). Thereafter, he most willingly and cheerfully held the hands of the two brothers and handed them over to sage Vishwamitra by falling at his feet.

[The gesture of falling at the sage's feet has many connotations. It is a token of total submission and a sign of humility, as a gesture of showing great reverence, honour and respect to the sage, and also to silently tell the sage that he is giving away to him what was more dear to heart than his own life just to honour the sanctity of the sage's words and in deference to his wishes. It also means that the king offered his beloved sons to the sage with a subtle request to take special care of Ram and Laxman who were merely boys then. Henceforth, the safety and security, the welfare and well-being of these two princes were in the kind hands of the sage.]

At this (i.e. when the king politely handed over the two brothers to the sage), a sense of great happiness, of immense bliss, of exhilaration and extreme ecstasy began to surge in the sage's heart.

[It is natural to happen—for now the sage would have the unparalleled privilege and the good fortune to be very close to the Supreme Lord, and be the first sage with whom the Lord spent some of his time on earth. The sage was also happy that he would be playing a pivotal role in the divine objective for which Lord Vishnu manifested on the earth as a human being—which was being instrumental in getting the work of slaying the demons started in right earnest by getting the first group of demons who were disturbing his fire sacrifice killed. This was the first step in a long chain of such events that would ultimately culminate in the killing of the cruel demon king Ravana of Lanka. The sage surely felt privileged at being able to set the ball rolling and going down in history as the one who took the Lord by the hand to motivate him and prod him to do what he had come to do on this earth.] (2).

Tulsidas says—the Lord Sri Ram is as splendid, magnificent, charming and attractive as crores (millions) of Kamdeo-cupids taken together. He is so exceptionally

charming and so magnetic in his personality that as soon as one sees him he is completely bowled-over; he is completely enthralled and captivated by the divine sight of the Lord. The Lord appears to resemble the Sun as it migrates north of the equator, accompanied by the two months of Chaitra [March-April] and Vaishaakh [May-June] in a personified form. [One represents sage Vishwamitra, and the other his brother Laxman.] (3). [51/1-3]

{Though initially reluctant, Dasrath finally allowed Lord Ram and Laxman to accompany sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage in the forest. On the way the Lord met the demoness Tadka, who attacked them. The Lord killed this demoness with the least of effort. This was Lord Ram's first encounter with the demon race. At the sage's hermitage, the Lord protected the fire sacrifice by killing the demon army when it attacked, but he let off their chief Marich by hitting him with a headless arrow which flung the demon far away in the middle of the ocean. It was this demon who was later to become a golden deer and be instrumental in Sita's abduction by the demon king Ravana.

Then news came that a king named Janak was holding a marriage ceremony for his daughter Sita in which the condition for the marriage was a huge and strong bow of Lord Shiva that was in possession of the king. He declared that anyone who would lift it, string it, and pull it would be able to marry Sita. He sent an invitation to sage Vishwamitra. So the sage took Ram and Laxman when he went to attend the ceremony. On the way the Lord liberated Ahilya who was a chaste wife of sage Gautam but was converted into a stone due to some curse. Lord Ram touched her with his holy feet, and as soon as the dust of his feet touched her she was freed from her curse.}

Vishwamitra Departs for his Ashram, the Slaying of Tadka, Protection of the Fire Sacrifice, and Liberation of Ahilya:

Geetawali: Raag Sarang—Verse no. 1/52—

ऋषि सँग हरषि चले दोउ भाई ।
 पितु-पद बंदि सीस लियो आयसु, सुनि सिष आसिष पाई ॥ 1 ॥
 नील पीत पाथोज बरन बपु, बय किसोर बनि आई ।
 सर धनु-पानि, पीत पट कटितट, कसे निखंग बनाई ॥ 2 ॥
 कलित कंठ मनि-माल, कलेवर चंदन खौरि सुहाई ।
 सुंदर बदन, सरोरुह-लोचन, मुखछबि बरनि न जाई ॥ 3 ॥
 पल्लव, पंख, सुमन सिर सोहत क्यों कहौं बेष-लुनाई ?
 मनु मूरति धरि उभय भाग भइ त्रिभुवन सुंदरताई ॥ 4 ॥
 पैठत सरनि, सिलनि चढ़ि चितवत, खग-मृग-बन रुचिराई ।
 सादर सभय सप्रेम पुलकि मुनि पुनि-पुनि लेत बुलाई ॥ 5 ॥
 एक तीर तकि हती ताडका, बिद्या बिप्र पढ़ाई ।
 राख्यो जग्य जीति रजनीचर, भइ जग-बिदित बड़ाई ॥ 6 ॥
 चरन-कमल-रज-परस अहल्या, निज पति-लोक पठाई ।
 तुलसिदास प्रभुके बूझे मुनि सुरसरि कथा सुनाई ॥ 7 ॥

Verse no.1/52—The two brothers (Ram and Laxman) started on their journey most happily with the sage (for his hermitage). They worshipped their father's feet (i.e. they touched his feet as a gesture of showing great respect), cheerfully accepted his orders (to accompany the sage), heard his advices, and accepted his blessings (1).

The bodies of the two brothers are as beautiful as a blue and a yellow lotus respectively, and they are in their teens. [Since Sri Ram is dark complexioned, he is like the blue lotus, and since Laxman is of a fair complexion he is likened to a yellow coloured flower.] A bow and an arrow adorn the hands of both the brothers, while a Pitambar and a quiver adorn each of their waists. [The brothers are holding a bow and an arrow in their hands, and the yellow silk cloth known as the Pitambar as well as the quiver are tied around their waists.] (2).

There is a gem-studded garland (necklace) around their charming and elegant necks, a light paste of sandalwood is smeared on their bodies, and it is not possible to describe in words the charm and the bewitching beauty of their enthralling image, of their beautiful face, of their general demeanours, and of their lotus-like eyes (3).

There are new (freshly plucked) leaves, (peacock) feathers and (colourful) flowers adorning their heads. [They have been tucked in the thick lock of hairs on their heads. Or it might also mean that freshly plucked leaves, peacock feathers and flowers are stuck in the crown that they are wearing.] How can I (Tulsidas) describe their enthralling charm and fascinating beauty? It appears to me that the best of the virtue of 'beauty' that exists anywhere in the entire Tribhuvan (the 3 worlds—subterranean, terrestrial and celestial) has divided itself in to two halves and manifested in the form of these two (brothers, Ram and Laxman). [That is, the two brothers look so exceptionally charming and fabulous that all the beauty that exists in this creation seems to have personified itself in their forms.] (4).

En-route to the hermitage of the sage (Vishwamitra), the two brothers frolic around (as is the wont of children), sometimes entering (splashing or taking a dip into) lakes and other water bodies, and at other times climbing on the top of boulders and rocks, and as they wended their way through the forest path they eagerly and excitedly watched the birds, the animals and the general beauty of the surrounding forest and countryside. The sage becomes worried and fearful (about their safety), and overwhelmed with affection for them he repeatedly summons them to come close to him and stop running away (5).

[Like ordinary children going out for picnic, the two brothers were very excited as they walked on either side of the great sage through the path of the wild forest. They would often wander away from the sage, running into the water of a pond or a lake and splashing in it, spraying each other with the cool water and giggling cheerfully, and at other times they would canter up a hillock to see who can climb first, and then ran down the slope cheering and yelling in excitement. They had been left alone from the constant vigil kept by the royal guards of the king's palace for the first time, and were feeling like un-caged birds. Fascinated by the new sights and scenes they saw every other moment they would gape with amazement at the countless birds and animals that they encountered on the way. The verdant greenery of the forest and its charm enthralled the children no end. Obviously, they were terribly amused, excited and amazed. But this

constant running away and creating mischief made the sage worried about their safety. It's an extremely beautiful imagery. The sage would enjoy this scene in his heart as he knew that no harm can ever come to them no matter what happens. But then he is overcome with love for them and begins to worry for their safety like an ordinary human being. This verse shows us the great effect of Maya or the delusions that the Lord creates. Even an enlightened sage of the exalted stature of sage Vishwamitra who had known who Ram and Laxman were—because this was the precise reason why he had gone to fetch them—got trapped by the snare of Maya, forgetting for the moment the true form of the two brothers as being human images of the Supreme Being. But the fact of the matter is that it is this very down-to-earth feeling of love, affection and a sense of belonging to the Lord which is what that captivates the Lord and keeps him compelled to reciprocate the devotee's emotions and sentiments. The tables are turned, and a time comes when the Lord begins to worry about his devotee more than the devotee's longing for the Lord! It's a very practical and hands-on approach to realizing the soul's objective of attaining nearness to the Divine Being. It's definitely an easy way to reach one's goal as compared to the path of observing rigorous schedules and sacraments such as Japa, Yoga and Samadhi as mentioned in one of the verses above.]

Sage Vishwamitra taught them archery. The Lord aimed a single arrow at the demoness Tadka and slayed her. Thereafter, at the hermitage, the Lord vanquished the demons and protected the fire-sacrifice of the sage. This marvelous and astounding deed of his led to the spread of his fame throughout the world (6).

In due course of time, the Lord sent Ahilya (wife of sage Gautam, who was converted into a stone due to a curse¹) back to her husband's household. Tulsidas says that this was the moment when the sage told Lord Ram the story of river Ganges (and how it descended on the earth from the heavens²) (7).

[Note—¹The story of *Ahilya* is described in the Glossary given in appendix no. 2 at the end of this book.]

Lord Ram was taught by sage Vishwamitra some of the secret knowledge that only the sage possessed. This is clearly said in Geetawali, verse no. 55, stanza no. 6. This verse is also of exceptional beauty. So let's read it—

Geetawali: Raag Kaanhara—Verse no. 1/55—

सोहत मग मुनि सँग दोउ भाई ।
 तरुन तमाल चारु चंपक—छबि कबि—सुभाय कहि जाई ॥ 1 ॥
 भूषन बसन अनुहरत अंगनि, उमगति सुन्दरताई ।
 बदन मनोज सरोज लोचननि रही है लुभाइ लुनाई ॥ 2 ॥
 अंसनि धनु, सर कर—कमलनि, कटि कसे हैं निखंग बनाई ।
 सकल भुवन सोभा सरबस लघु लागति निरखि निकाई ॥ 3 ॥
 महि मृदु पथ, घन छाँह, सुमन सुर बरष, पवन सुखदाई ।
 जल—थल—रुह फल, फूल, सलिल सब करत प्रेम पहुनाई ॥ 4 ॥
 सकुच समीत बिनीत साथ गुरु बोलनि—चलनि सुहाई ।

खग-मृग-चित्र बिलोकत बिच-बिच, लसति ललित लरिकाई॥ 5॥
 बिद्या दई जानि बिद्यानिधि, बिद्यहु लही बड़ाई।
 ख्याल दली ताडुका, देखि ऋषि देत असीस अघाई॥ 6॥
 बूझत प्रभु सुरसरि-प्रसंग कहि निज कुल कथा सुनाई।
 गाधिसुवन-सनेह-सुख-संपति उर-आश्रम न समाई॥ 7॥
 बनबासी बटु, जती, जोगि-जन साधु-सिद्ध-समुदाई।
 पूजत पेखि प्रीति पुलकत तनु नयन लाभ लुटि पाई॥ 8॥
 मख राख्यो खलदल दलि भुजबल, बाजत बिबुध बधाई।
 नित पथ-चरित-सहित तुलसी-चित बसत लखन रघुराई॥ 9॥

Verse no. 1/55—The sight of the two brothers walking alongside sage Vishwamitra looks magnificent and marvelous on the road. As a poet, one can compare the young bodies of the brothers to a young Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant; or an evergreen tree called *Xanthocynus Epietoriosis*) and the Champak (Magnolia) plant (1).

The Lord's garments and ornaments are befitting them (are in accordance or consonant with the beauty of their bodies). Glamour seems to effuse or spill over from them as if the combined beauty, charm and attractiveness of Kamdeo-cupid and the lotus flower have taken permanent residence in their faces and eyes respectively. [That is, their bodies are as charming and attractive as that of Kamdeo-cupid, and the bewitching beauty of their eyes is like that of the lotus flower.] (2).

There is a bow slung on his (Sri Ram's) shoulder, an arrow is held in his hand, and a quiver has been tied properly around his waist. All the glamour, magnificence, pomp, pageantry and beauty of all the 14 Bhuvans (realms of the universe)¹ appear negligible or most humble when compared with that of the Lord's (3).

As the trio walk on the forest path to the hermitage of the sage, the earth provides a soft path, the clouds give shade, the Gods shower flowers, and the breeze blows comfortably and pleasantly (so that their journey on foot is made very pleasant and enjoyable). The flowers and the fruits which grow either on the land or in the water are eagerly waiting for the Lord's passage and welcoming him. All sorts of water bodies (lakes, ponds, rivers, streams etc.) are too as eager and welcoming for the Lord. [The meaning is clear—wherever the Lord goes he finds flowers in full bloom and ripe fruits in abundance. The water of lakes and rivers etc. are clear as crystal, pristine pure, rejuvenating and cool, expecting that the Lord would dip himself in their waters! They are all welcoming the Lord affectionately. The flowers bloom in all imaginable colours to show the Lord how happy they are. The fruits become as sweet as they could become. And the water feels privileged if the Lord jumps into it with merriment. And the magical part is that the Lord obliges them all—he plucks the flowers and kisses them; he climbs trees to take the fruits to eat them; he dashes off to the stream and plunges in its water. The normally turbid, algae infested water of ponds too became crystal clear and potable. If we read the earlier verse and combine it with this verse, the scene is most heart-touching.] (4).

The Lord's hesitant demeanour, his speech (the way he talks), his gait and steps as he walks, his sense of fear that he should not annoy the sage, and his overall behaviour of

respectful humility in front of the Guru (Vishwamitra)—all of them appear very noble and righteous. When he stops on and off to gaze at different varieties of birds and animals on the way, the endearing child-like innocent expression on his face, his demeanours and his amazement at the fascinating sight make him look very charming and pleasant to behold (5).

Thereafter, inspite of knowing Lord Ram to be a treasury of all sorts of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, skills and expertise, the Guru still preferred to impart them to him (Sri Ram) in a formal way. Meanwhile, the virtues of knowledge, wisdom, discretion and expertise of all kinds (known as 'Vidya') got honour and fame by being accepted by (or being considered worthy of acceptance by) Lord Sri Ram.

Then, he (Lord Ram) playfully (i.e. without any effort) slayed the demoness Tadka, seeing which the sage liberally blessed him (6).

When the Lord enquired about the story behind river Ganges' descent on the earth, the sage narrated that story along with the entire story of his (Raghu's) clan. At this time, Vishwamitra's wealth of happiness, bliss, joy and delight as well as love and affection for the Lord could not accommodate itself in his hermitage represented by his heart. [While narrating these stories about river Ganges and Raghu's clan, the sage was ecstatic and so overjoyed that happiness overflowed from his mind and heart. The sage was extremely thrilled and excited as if he has found the nectar for which the most enlightened of sages and seers had spent the entire lives doing Tapa, Japa, Yoga and Samadhi.] (7).

The Brahmacharis (celibates; here meaning students of the sage), Sanyasis (those who have renounced the world), Yogis (ascetics), Sadhus (saints, hermits, sages, seers—those who were pious and holy) and hordes of Siddhas (mystics; those who had attained or possessed mystical powers) who lived in the forest became bodily thrilled when they happened to see the Lord in their midst. They felt that their eyes have been amply rewarded when they saw the divine sight of the Lord amongst them (8).

That the Lord has used the strength of his arms to vanquish and crush the evil ones (demons) and has protected the Yagya (fire sacrifice) was enough reason for the Gods to sing adulatory songs in honour of the Lord, songs that were meant to celebrate and honour the good tidings and auspicious events of the time. Tulsidas avers that the image of Sri Ram and Laxman on the Road (to Vishwamitra's hermitage and thereafter to Janakpur), as well as their enchanting activities en-route eternally resides in his (Tulsidas') mind and heart. [The saint says that this imagery of the Lord is permanently etched in his memory and heart.] (9).

[Note—¹The 14 Bhuvans are the following— There are *fourteen Bhuvans* or Lokas according to Padma Puran, and they are the following—(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu, (ii) Bhuvha, (iii) Swaha, (iv) Maha, (v) Janaha, (vi) Tapaha, and (vii) Satyam. (B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha Loka:— (i) Atal, (ii) Vital, (iii) Satal, (iv) Rasaatal, (v) Talaatal, (vi) Mahaatal, and (vii) Paataal. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto)1, section 1, verse no. 1 says that these fourteen Bhuvans are protected by Brahma the creator who created this world.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse no. 35 says that Brahma-Loka is like the ceremonial umbrella on the head of Lord Vishnu, while the seven nether worlds known as the 'Patal-Lokas' represent the Lord's feet.]

Lord Ram's first encounter with demons: Ram Charit Manas

चले जात मुनि दीन्हि देखाई। सुनि ताड़का क्रोध करि धाई॥५
एकहिं बान प्रान हरि लीन्हा। दीन जानि तेहि निज पद दीन्हा॥६ [1/209/5-6]

En-route to Vishwamitra hermitage, a lady demon called Tadka attacked them. Lord Ram slayed her with only one arrow, and realising that she was distressed¹, he bestowed her with the privilege of attaining his own divine feet, i.e. he gave her soul its liberation and deliverance.[1/209/5-6].

[Note—¹The Lord realised that she was behaving cruelly and sinfully because her body was that of a demon, but the soul that lived in that body was as holy as the soul should be. The holy soul was trapped unfortunately in body of a demoness, and the soul ought not be punished for the evil deeds of the body. Besides this, Tadka was privileged to have had the divine Darshan or sight of the Supreme Lord, and the Lord's seeing cannot go in vain. It will be observed by closely examining the story of the Ramayana that all the demons who were killed by the Lord had attained salvation and emancipation of their souls. The body was killed, and the trapped soul was liberated from its snare.

Remember: the Lord had come to provide solace and succour, and not to be vengeful and be cruel like the demons. He did what he did only to ensure that the soul of the demon-bodies was liberated and delivered. He had killed the demons because they would not listen to reasoning, but the Lord's intention was not to kill them for the sake of enjoying blood-bath but to liberate their soul from the torments of the body of the demon in which the soul was itself trapped and yearning to get out. When we look at the entire story with this perspective then it acquires a whole new meaning and a spiritually uplifting dimension for us. It is not simply a battle of the good over the bad but a master piece of a story that shows us how merciful and gracious our Lord Ram is that he had taken all the trouble to live in the forest for 14 long years and suffer all the agonies that he did as a human being just to ensure that the soul trapped in the body of the demons is set free from its torments and horrors!]

प्रात कहा मुनि सन रघुराई। निर्भय जग्य करहु तुम्ह जाई॥१
होम करन लागे मुनि झारी। आपु रहे मख कीं रखवारी॥२
सुनि मारीच निसाचर क्रोही। लै सहाय धावा मुनिद्रोही॥३
बिनु फर बान राम तेहि मारा। सत जोजन गा सागर पारा॥४
पावक सर सुबाहु पुनि मारा। अनुज निसाचर कटकु सँघारा॥५ [1/210/1-5]

In the morning, Lord Ram (Raghu Rai) asked Vishwamitra to go and perform the fire sacrifice without any fear. All the sages (1) started offering oblation to the sacred fire, while Lord Ram stood on guard (2).

On hearing this, the demon Marich, along with his companions, attacked the site of the sacrifice (3). Lord Ram repulsed his attack and hit him hard with a headless arrow (the arrow that did not have the tip but only the shaft), and knocked him off (flung him) 800 miles beyond the sea-shore (14).

Thereafter, he killed the demon Subahu, the brother of Marich, with the fire weapon (a sort of missile), while Ram's younger brother exterminated the rest of the army of demons (5) [1/210/1-5].

{Now we move to the next phase of the story. As said earlier, an invitation had come to sage Vishwamitra from the king of Janakpur, known as Janak, that he was organizing a marriage ceremony for his daughter named Sita in which he had invited all the great kings as well as the great sages and seers of the realm. So the sage is warmly invited to come. The sage took the two brothers Ram and Laxman along with him. The following verses will now describe what happened on the road to Janakpur.}

Liberation of Ahilya: Ram Charit Manas

आश्रम एक दीख मग माहीं। खग मृग जीव जंतु तहँ नाहीं।।११
 पूछा मुनिहि सिला प्रभु देखी। सकल कथा मुनि कहा बिसेषी।।१२
 दोहा- गौतम नारि श्राप बस उपल देह धरि धीर।
 चरन कमल रज चाहति कृपा करहु रघुबीर।।२१० [Chaupai lines 1/210/11,12, Doha 210.]
 छन्द- परसत पद पावन सोक नसावन प्रगट भई तपपुंज सही। [Chanda 1/211/1]

Proceeding further ahead, they arrived at an un-inhabited and barren hermitage (11). When Lord Ram enquired about a stone-slab (rock) lying there, sage Vishwamitra told him the entire story behind it (12). Sage Gautam's wife (Ahilya) had been turned into a stone under a curse, and it was prophesized that she would resume her normal self when Lord Ram touched her (the stone) with his feet. (1/210). [Chaupai lines 1/210/11,12, Doha 210.]

As soon as he did so, the stone turned into the lady Ahilya who had become liberated of her curse by the touch of the Lord's holy feet and its dust. She looked as magnificent as if Tapa (the virtues of austerity and penance as well as chastity and immaculacy) was personified in her physical form. [Chanda 1/211/1]

Geetawali: Verse no. 1/58—

परत पद-पंकज ऋषि-रवनी।
 भई है प्रगट अति दिव्य देह धरि मानो त्रिभुवन-छबि-छवनी।।१
 देखि बड़ो आचरज, पुलकि तनु कहति मुदित मुनि-भवनी।

जो चलिहैं रघुनाथ पयादेहि, सिला न रहिहि अवनी॥२
 परसि जो पाँय पुनीत सुरसरी सोहै तीनि-गवनी।
 तुलसिदास तेहि चरन-रेनुकी महिमा कहै मति कवनी॥३ [1/58/1-3]

Verse no. 1/58—As soon as the dust of Lord Ram's feet touched Ahilya, she turned (from a stone) into a divine lady, as if she was the daughter of the goddess of beauty in this universe (1). Seeing this wonder, all the consorts of various hermits in the forest began to speculate that all the stones on the path treaded by Lord Ram would be converted into ladies, and it would be difficult to find stones anymore in this world (2). Tulsidas says that no one is wise enough to describe the mystical fame and the divine glory of the Lord whose mere touch of river Ganges by his holy feet had turned this river into the holiest river in the world (3). [1/58/1-3]

Arrival at Janakpur: Ram Charit Manas

हरषि चले मुनि बृंद सहाया। बेगि बिदेह नगर निअराया॥ [1/212/4]
 बिस्वामित्र महामुनि आए। समाचार मिथिलापति पाए॥८
 दोहा- संग सचिव सुचि भूरि भट भूसुर बर गुर ग्याति।
 चले मिलन मुनिनायकहिं मुदित राउ एहि भाँति॥ [Chaupai lines 1/214/8, Doha 214]
 सुंदर सदन सुखद सब काला। तहाँ बासु लै दीन्ह भुआला॥ [1/217/7]

The party (Ram, Laxman, Vishwamitra and other sages who joined them) soon arrived at Janakpur (city of Vidheha, the father of Sita) [1/212/4]. The Lord of Mithila (King Janak) heard of the arrival of the great sage Vishwamitra [1/214/8] and went forward to receive him. He was accompanied by ministers, knights, Brahmins, family priest (Satanand) and his kins-men. [Doha 1/214.].

After exchange of pleasantries and showing of mutual respect, the king gave a pleasant and comfortable place for Vishwamitra to stay in his city [1/217/7].

Geetawali: Verse no. 1/61—

आये सुनि कौसिक जनक हरषाने हैं।
 बोलि गुर भूसुर, समाज सों मिलन चले,
 जानि बड़े भाग अनुराग अकुलाने हैं॥१
 नाइ सीस पगनि, असीस पाइ प्रमुदित,
 पाँवड़े अरघ देत आदर सो आने हैं।
 असन, बसन, वासकै सुपास सब विधि,
 पूजि प्रिय पाहुने, सुभाय सनमाने हैं॥२ [1/61/1-2]

Verse no. 1/61—When king Janak heard of the arrival of Vishwamitra, he was full of joy. He called the Brahmins and all his kin, and proceeded to meet him, bubbling with enthusiasm (1). When he met the sage, he bowed his head at his feet and got due

blessings in return. Then he washed the sage's feet as a mark of great respect, and welcomed him with gifts of food, clothes etc. Then the king gave him a comfortable place to stay in the city (2). [1/61/1-2].

The Barvai Ramayan describes the day of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita in its verse no. 14 as follows—

नित्य नेम कृत अरुन उदय जब कीन ।
निरखि निसाकर नृप मुख भए मलीन ।।14 ।।

14-[Tulsidas describes the early morning of the marriage at Janakpur—] When the sun rose on the horizon in the morning, Sri Ram and Laxman did their daily morning routine. Seeing him, the faces of all other assembled (or invited) kings and princes paled like the moon is after sun-rise. [Here, Lord Ram is compared to the rising sun, and the rest of the kings as the moon. Just as the shine of the moon fades away when the sun rises on the horizon, all hopes of the kings and princes of marrying Sita by breaking the bow were dashed when Lord Ram appeared at the venue.]

{On the auspicious day fixed for the marriage ceremony, a formal invitation was sent once again to all those who had come and pitched their camps at Janakpur. A messenger was sent to where Vishwamitra was lodged, inviting the sage and the two brothers Ram and Laxman formally to the venue of the ceremony.}

Invitation for Bow-Breaking Ceremony: Ram Charit Manas

सतानंदु तब जनक बोलाए। कौसिक मुनि पहिं तुरत पठाए।।9
जनक बिनय तिन्ह आइ सुनाई। हरषे बोलि लिए दोउ भाई।।10
दोहा- सतानंद पद बंदि प्रभु बैठे गुर पहिं जाइ।
चलहु तात मुनि कहेउ तब पठवा जनक बोलाइ।। [Chaupai lines 1/239/9-10, Doha 239.]
सीय स्वयंवरू देखिअ जाई। ईसु काहि धौं देइ बड़ाई।। [1/240/1]

When the appropriate time arrived for the Bow-Breaking ceremony, king Janak summoned his family Guru Satanand and sent him as an emissary to Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra). Satanand came to the place where Vishwamitra and the two brothers were lodged and conveyed the prayerful invitation of Janak to the sage. Hearing the news, the sage (Vishwamitra) called the two brothers near him (9-10).

The Lord (Ram) came, showed his respect to Satanand by bowing at his feet, and sat down near his Guru (Vishwamitra). The sage then told him—‘Come let's go, because king Janak has sent an invitation. (Doha 1/239). Let us go and see the marriage ceremony of Sita. Let us see whom the Lord chooses for acquiring the fame (of being able to marry Sita).’ (1/240/1).

Purpose of Bow-Breaking Ceremony: Ram Charit Manas

तब बंदीजन जनक बोलाए। बिरिदावली कहत चलि आए। 7
 कह नृपु जाइ कहहु पन मोरा। चले भाट हियँ हरषु न थोरा॥ 8
 दोहा- बोले बंदी वचन बर सुनहु सकल महिपाल।
 पन बिदेह कर कहहिँ हम भुजा उठाइ बिसाल॥ [1/249]
 नृप भुजबल बिधु सिवधनु राहू। गरुअ कठोर बिदित सब काहू॥
 सोइ पुरारि कोदंडु कठोरा। राज समाज आजु जोइ तोरा॥ 3
 त्रिभुवन जय समेत बैदेही। बिनहिँ बिचार बरइ हठि तेही॥ 4 [1/250/1,3-4]

Then king Janak summoned his heralds who came in while singing the glories of the great achievements of the king and his clan. They praised the king and lauded his successes and accomplishments. [This was a standard practice in royal courts then. It was a method by which all those assembled were made aware of the great deeds and achievements of the host king. Special bards were employed by kings to extol them and eulogize them in public.] (7).

The king instructed them to go on the stage and declare his intentions and vows (to the assembled princes and other nobles of the august gathering). Thereupon, the heralds or bards proceeded on this mission with great joy (8).

They declared to the assembly—‘Oh assembled Princes! We announce for you all the intention of holding this ceremony and the great vow of king Videha (Janak) [1/249/0]. The strength of your arms is like the full moon, while this Bow of Lord Shiva is like Rahu. [According to a legend, Rahu eats the moon during lunar eclipses. The moon enters the demon’s mouth and emerges from his neck that had been severed from the body long ago during the episode of the churning of the ocean.] This Bow is massive, heavy, strong and un-yielding (1). This is Lord Shiva’s Bow, and whoever in the royal assembly today shall break it (3), he would be married to Sita without any hesitation and with great cheer. This achievement of his would be a token of his victory over the three worlds. [This is because it was Lord Shiva’s bow, and Shiva is the ‘Maheshwar’ or the great God and the Lord of the whole world. It is not a joke to play fools with this bow. So if anyone breaks it then it would prove beyond doubt that he is also very strong and powerful.] (4).’ [1/250/1, 3-4]

Geetawali : Verse no. 1/89/1-3—

सुनो भैया भूप सकल दै कान।
 बज्ररेख गजदसन जनक—पन बेद—बिदित, जग जान॥ 1॥
 घोर कठोर पुरारि—सरासन, नाम प्रसिद्ध पिनाकु।
 जो दसकंठ दियो बाँवों, जेहि हर—गिरि किया है मनाकु॥ 2॥
 भूमि—भाल भ्राजत, न चलत सो, ज्यों बिरंचिको आँकु।
 धनु तोरै सोई बरै जानकी, राउ होइ कि राँकु॥ 3॥

Verse no. 1/89/1-3—The herelds declared on behalf of the king of Janak—‘Oh Brothers! Oh Princes! Please lend us your ears. King Janak's vow is stone-engraved and like ivory (i.e. like a marking on a stone, they cannot be erased; and like ivory tusk of an elephant they can't be bent backwards). It is famed in the Vedas and the world knows it (1). Lord Shiva's Bow called the 'Pinak' (Pinaak) is extremely strong and hard. It humbled even Demon Ravana who could subdue Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva). [That is, this bow of Shiva could not be lifted by Ravana who was so strong that he once lifted the entire mountain called Kailash where Lord Shiva lives. It will give you an idea of how strong and hard this bow is.] (2). It is embedded like a crown on the head of the earth and can't be moved (waived) like the word of the creator (Brahma). But whosoever—whether a king or pauper—breaks this remarkable Bow shall marry Janki (Sita).’ (3).

The Bow Breaking: Ram Charit Manas

कहहु काहि यहु लाभु न भावा। काहुँ न संकर चाप चढ़ावा।।1
रहउ चढ़ाउब तोरब भाई। तिलु भरि भूमि न सके छड़ाई।।2 [1/252/1, 2]

Inspite of their best efforts, none of the assembled princes could break the bow. No one could even raise and string it, what to talk of breaking it. Come to think of it, no one could shift, move or raise it even as much for a distance that a piece of grain occupies. [That is, the bow did not move even for a fraction of a centimeter.]

गुरहि प्रनामु मनहिं मन कीन्हा। अति लाघवँ उठाइ धनु लीन्हा।।5
लेत चढ़ावत खँचत गाढ़ें। काहुँ न लखा देख सबु ठाढ़ें।।7
तेहि छन राम मध्य धनु तोरा। भरे भुवन धुनि घोर कठोरा।।8 [1/261/5,7-8]
गावहिं छबि अवलोकि सहेली। सियँ जयमाल राम उर मेली।। [1/264/8]

On seeing King Janak's agony and lamentation for not being able to find a groom for Sita, sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to rise to the occasion and do the needful. So the Lord bowed his head mentally (to pay his obeisance) at his guardian's /Guru's feet and lifted the bow swiftly (5). No one realised what was happening while Lord Ram quickly took it into his hands, strung it, and pulled the string tight (7). At that moment, the bow snapped in the middle, breaking into two halves. The thunderous sound and the ear-splitting crash of the breaking resonated through all the directions (8) [1/261/5,7-8].

Thus, it was officially declared that Lord Ram had become eligible to marry Sita. She, accompanied by her maids singing joyful songs, came near him and placed the garland (symbolizing the victory and the marriage) round the neck of Lord Ram. The victory garland rested on the chest of the Lord majestically (1/264/8).

Kavitawali: Verse no. 1/8—

छोनीमेंके छोनीपति छाजै जिन्है छत्रछाया
 छोनी-छोनी छाए छिति आए निमिराजके ।
 प्रबल प्रचंड बरिबंड बर बेष बपु
 बरिबेकों बोले बैदेही बर काजके ।।
 बोले बंदी विरुद बजाइ बर बाजनेऊ
 बाजे-बाजे बीर बाहु धुनत समाजके ।
 तुलसी मुदित मन पुर नर-नारि जेते
 बार-बार हेरै मुख औध-मृगराजके ।।८।।

Verse no. 1/8— Those great kings (emperors) who are entitled to have a decorated royal umbrella held over their heads (as a sign of their seniority and exalted stature in the hierarchy of kings and emperors) have come from all the corners of the earth to king Janak's place, and they have pitched their respective camps with all the pomp and pageantry. They are very strong and powerful, full of valour and bravery, and are radiant and pompous; their bodies and clothes effuse glamour and charm. All of them have been invited to try their hand (luck) at marrying Sita (through the bow-lifting competition). The best of royal bards (royal singers, called the 'Bandijans') sing the fame of their respective lords (kings and emperors), the musicians are playing their instruments, and some warriors of that royal assembly enthusiastically beat (thump) their arms occasionally (in an outburst of excitement to indicate that they are ready for the challenge).

Tulsidas says that in such times, all the residents of Janakpur repeatedly watch the (bewitching beauty of the) face of Lord Ram, the lion of Ayodhya, and feel happy in their hearts (because they hope, and are convinced, that the ultimate glory of marrying Sita would be of Ram's).

Kavitawali: Verse no. 1/9—

सियकें स्वयंबर समाजु जहाँ राजनिको
 राजनके राजा महाराजा जानै नाम को ।
 पवनु, पुरंदरु, कृसानु, भानु, धनदु-से,
 गुनके निधान रूपधाम सोमु कामु को ।।
 बान बलवान जातुधानप सरीखे सूर
 जिन्हकें गुमान सदा सालिम संग्रामको ।
 तहाँ दसरथकें समत्थ नाथ तुलसीके
 चपरि चढ़ायौ चापु चंद्रमाललामको ।।९।।

Verse no. 1/9— At the place where the Swayambar of Sita (a competitive system where any person who could fulfill the pre-set conditions could marry the princess) was to be organized, there were many Emperors and King of kings amongst the august assembly, and it is not possible to know their names. [That is, so many of them have come from all the corners of the earth that it is not practically possible to know who is who.]

The assembled Royals were a magnificent sight to behold—all of them were handsome and smart, they presented a sight of opulence, regal splendour and radiance, they were all virtuous, exhibited grandeur and pompousness, and were comparable to the great Gods such as Vayu (God of Wind), Indra (King of Gods), Agni (Fire-God), Sun,

and Kuber (God's treasurer) so much so that the Moon (regarded as the most beautiful celestial body by poets) and Kamdeo (God of love, passion, beauty and cupid) stood no chance (of being praised and recognised in comparison to the great kings and emperors who have come on the occasion). [The assembled princes and kings and emperors were so handsome and charming to look at that neither the Moon nor the Kamdeo-cupid, who have traditionally been regarded as metaphors for beauty and charm, of opulence and grandeur, stood any chance to win against them.]

Among them were highly acclaimed warriors such as Vanasur and Ravana, the king of demons, who were proud of their invincibility in the battlefield. In the same assembly, Tulsidas' able Lord Ram quickly and effortlessly lifted the bow of Lord Shiva who wears the moon in his lock of hairs on his head.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 1/10—

मयनमहनु पुरदहनु गहन जानि
आनिकै सबैको सारु धनुष गढ़ायो है॥1
जनकसदसि जेते भले-भले भूमिपाल
किये बलहीन, बलु आपनो बढ़ायो है॥2
कुलिस-कठोर कूर्मपीठतें कठिन अति
हठि न पिनाकु काहूँ चपरि चढ़ायो है॥3
तुलसी सो रामके सरोज-पानि परसत ही
टूट्यो मानो बारे ते पुरारि ही पढ़ायो है॥4

Verse no. 1/10—Lord Shiva had made this Bow out of the hardest and the strongest material because he had to use it to slay the demon Tripura and crush the pride of Kamdev (1). That Bow had vanquished and trounced the strength of all the assembled princes, and as a result, had added to its inherent strength (2). No prince could raise and string the Bow which was stronger than Vajra (the bolt of lightening used as a weapon by God King Indra) and harder than the shell of tortoise (3).

Tulsidas says that the same Bow broke when it came in contact with Ram's hands as if it had been instructed by Lord Shiva to do so (i.e. break in Ram's hands without any effort; to break voluntarily so that the Lord does not have to make any effort) (4).

Kavitawali: Verse no. 1/11—

डिगति उर्वि अति गुर्वि सर्ब पब्बै समुद्र-सर।
ब्याल बधिर तेहि काल, बिकल दिगपाल चराचर॥
दिग्गयंद लरखरत परत दसकंधु मुख भर।
सुर-बिमान हिमभानु भानु संघटत परस्पर॥
चौंके बिरंचि संकर सहित, कोलु कमडु अहि कलमल्यौ।
ब्रह्मंड खंड कियो चंड धुनि जबहिं राम सिवधनु दल्यौ॥11॥

Verse no. 1/11—At the time when Lord Ram broke the great Bow of Lord Shiva, its terrible thunderous and reverberating sound pierced through the Universe. Its impact caused the exceptionally heavy earth, along with its mountains, oceans and lakes, to shake and tremble; the snakes became deaf; all the animate world along with Indra and other Gods became extremely scared and very agitated; even those who were most fearless, bold and courageous began to falter and tremble; Ravana stumbled and fell on his face; the vehicles of Gods, the Moon and the Sun began colliding with each other in the sky; Shiva and Brahma became alarmed and stunned; and Lords Varaaha (the Boar), Kachap (the Tortoise) and Sheshnath (the legendary serpent, the Boa) wriggled and writhed in the ensuing tumult and agitation.

The Barvai Ramayan describes the tense mood of the friends of Sita at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony in its verse no. 15 as follows—

कमठ पीठ धनु सजनी कठिन अँदेस ।
तमकि ताहि ए तोरिहिं कहब महेस ॥15॥

15-[At the arena, the women folk of Janakpur talk with each other on seeing Lord Sri Ram and Laxman. One said to another—] 'Oh gentle and kind friend! Only one doubt arises in my heart (as to whether or not Sri Ram would be able to marry Sita), because the bow is as hard as the shell of a tortoise'. [That is, she doubted whether Ram would be actually able to marry Sita because the marriage depends upon the bow and its breaking. And the bow is no ordinary one—it is extremely heavy, strong and tuff like the shell of a tortoise.]

[The companion replied—] 'He shall certainly break it swiftly, and in an instant. Lord Shiva shall instruct the bow to do so'.

The Barvai Ramayan describes how the city was plunged in gloom when it appeared that no invited king or prince would be able to break the bow, and the instant when Lord Ram broke it its verse no. 16 as follows—

नृप निरास भए निरखत नगर उदास ।
धनुष तोरि हरि सब कर हरेउ हरास ॥16॥

16-All the (assembled) kings became dejected and hopeless (on being unable to break the bow). The king (Janak) felt very sad when he saw that the city looked gloomy and its inhabitants were distraught; a pall of gloom and helplessness descended upon the city and its citizens. Then, Sri Ram, by breaking the bow, removed all their sorrows and worries. [The city and its inhabitants thought that now their beloved princess Sita would remain unmarried. But when Lord Ram broke the bow in a jiffy, an uproarious cheer went up in the air. There was an instantaneous mood of exhilaration, joy and happiness, and celebrations started immediately.]

{Now it so happened that when the thunderous roar of the bow breaking reached sage Parashuram, he meditated and learnt that the bow of his patron god, Lord Shiva, has been broken by someone. This he treated as an insult of Shiva. Sage Parashuram was a Brahmin who was renowned for his anger and intolerance. He was particularly against the Kshatriya race, and had been conquering and killing the arrogant, haughty, stubborn and cruel Kshatriya kings of the land. His only weapon was a battle axe—called a ‘Parashu’. This gave him the name ‘Parashuram’. So, as soon as he heard the sound of the bow being broken, he immediately rushed to the venue angrily to seek revenge and punish the person who had the temerity to break Shiva’s bow.

Upon arrival at the venue, at first he tried to brow-beat Lord Ram to surrender, but Ram was no ordinary prince. He was Lord Vishnu personified. So by and by this dawned upon Parashuram, and the sage asked for forgiveness from the Supreme Lord of creation who is even worshipped and revered by Lord Shiva. After all, the Shiva and Vishnu are but two manifestations of the same Supreme Being, so there was no question of Ram insulting Shiva. Pacified, the sage gave his own bow to Lord Ram and went away to do penance.

Now, let’s read what happened.}

The arrival of sage Parashuram, his angry rant, and his eventual relenting—

Kavitawali: Verse no. 1/22—

काल कराल नृपालन्हके धनुभंगु सुनै फरसा लिएँ धाए ।
लखनु रामु बिलोकि सप्रेम महारिसतें फिरी आँखि दिखाए ॥
धीरसिरोमनि बीर बड़े बिनयी बिजयी रघुनाथु सुहाए ।
लायक हे भृगुनायकु, से धनु-सायक सौँपि सुभायँ सिधाए ॥२२॥

Verse no. 1/22—Hearing about the breaking of the Bow (of Lord Shiva), sage Parashuram raised his axe and ran to take revenge. He came, and at first saw with affectionate eyes the lovable sight of Lord Ram and Sri Laxman, but then turned his eyes red with anger. Lord Ram is, by nature, very patient, tolerant, forgiving and humble, but at the same time he is also very courageous, brave, valiant, fearless and invincible. [That is, one must not think that Lord Ram is weak and coward because he is polite and courteous. His endearing demeanours and friendly exterior hides a tough interior and a firm resolve.]

Though the king of the Bhrigu’s race, i.e. sage Parashuram, was a most able warrior, but still he was subdued by the Lord with his grace. [The Lord overcame the anger of the sage with his graceful manners and tact.] The sage handed Lord Ram his own bow and arrow, and then returned back to his hermitage. [The sage realised that he was no ordinary prince but the Supreme Lord himself who has gracefully accepted to come down on the earth to eliminate the burden of the demons from the face of the earth.

So he relented and apologized. As a token of his surrender before the Lord of the world, he gave him his own bow and arrow.]

Geetawali: Verse no. 1/92—

मुनि-पदरेनु रघुनाथ माथे धरी है।
 रामरुख निरखि, लषनकी रजाइ पाइ,
 धरा धरा-धरनि सुसावधान करी है।।1
 सुमिरि गनेस-गुर, गौरि-हर, भूमिसुर।
 सोचत सकोचत सकोची बानि धरी है।
 दीनबंधु, कृपासिंधु, साहसिक, सीलसिंधु,
 सभाको सकोच कुलहूकी लाज परी है।।2
 पेखि पुरुषारथ, परखि पन, पेम, नेम,
 सिय-हियकी बिसेषि बड़ी खरभरी है।
 दाहिनो दियो पिनाकु, सहमि भयो मनाकु,
 महाब्याल बिकल बिलोकि जनु जरी है।।3
 सुर हरषत, बरषत फूल बार बार,
 सिद्ध-मुनि कहत, सगुन, सुभ घरी है।
 रामबाहु-बिटप बिसाल बौड़ी देखियत,
 जनक-मनोरथ कलपबेलि फरी है।।4
 लख्यौ न चढ़ावत, न तानत, न तोरत हू
 घोर धुनि सुनि सिवकी समाधि टरी है।
 प्रभु के चरित चारु तुलसी सुनत सुख,
 एक ही सुलाभ सबहीकी हानि हरी है।।5

Verse no. 1/92— When the opportune and appropriate moment came, Lord Ram put the dust of Sage Vishwamitra's feet to his head. At the instructions of Laxman, the mother earth asked her bearers to beware. [Laxman is a manifestation of the legendary Sheshnath who is said to hold the earth on its hood. So Laxman requested his assistants who were holding the earth to be ready and vigilant because the as soon as Lord Ram would break the heavy Bow there would be thunderous roar, and this could terrify them, and the vibrations produced by the terrific sound could topple the earth over.] (1).

Janki (Sita, the daughter of Janak) was exceedingly worried. She fervently prayed mentally to Lord Ganesh, her Guru Satanand, Goddess Parvati, Lord Shiva and holy men (seeking their blessings to help in this great moment of her life). She also prayed mentally to Lord Ram, saying silently—‘You are extolled as being an ocean of mercy and compassion, of being a friend of the distressed, of being brave and courageous, and of being graceful and kind. I am facing a dilemma in the face of the formidable Bow and the rigid vows of my father. What can I do?’ [Sita seemed to say that she has no choice of her own. She can’t break tradition, and if it was possible she would have cheerfully accepted the Lord as her groom. So, wouldn’t he step forward and break the Bow for her sake?] (2).

At that moment, seeing the boast of assembled princes, the vow of king Janak and the devotion and faith of Janki towards himself, Lord Ram circled the Bow in a clock-wise manner (to pay his due respect and obeisance to it because it was the Bow of Lord Shiva). At this graceful gesture of the Lord, it appeared that the Bow felt shy and humble, and shrank in size (as well as reduced in weight) (3).

Seeing this, all the Gods became joyous and showered flowers (from the sky on the venue). The time was most auspicious. The wish of Sita in the form of a creeper had spread on the tree of Lord Ram's arms, so to say. (4).

No one could see Lord Ram lifting, stringing and breaking that formidable Bow (i.e. it was done very swiftly and with the greatest of agility). The thunderous crashing sound of its snapping broke the meditative posture of Lord Shiva. Tulsidas says that all felt happy on hearing about this marvelous deed of Lord Ram. [Though the sound was ear-splitting, but it created joy in the hearts of all instead of making them terrified and scared. It was something welcome and to be rejoiced.] (5) [1/92].

Ram Charit Manas:

तेहिं अवसर सुनि सिव धनु भंगा। आयउ भृगुकुल कमल पतंगा॥ [1/268/2]
 सुनि मृदु गूढ बचन रघुपति के। उघरे पटल परसुधर मति के॥6
 राम रमापति कर धनु लेहू। खैंचहु मिटै मोर संदेहू॥7
 देत चापु आपुहिं चलि गयउ। परसुराम मन बिसमय भयऊ॥8
 दोहा- जाना राम प्रभाउ तब पुलक प्रफुल्लित गात।
 जोरि पानि बोले बचन हृदयँ न प्रेमु अमात॥ [Chaupai lines 1/284/6-8, Doha 284]
 कहि जय जय जय रघुकुलकेतू। भृगुपति गए बनहि तप हेतू॥ [1/285/7]

Sage Parashuram belonged to the clan of a sage named Brihgu Rishi. He was known to be of a furious temper, and had exterminated all the Kshatriya-race kings from this earth. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. So, on hearing that the Bow of his Lord has been broken, he became furious and came to the site of the ceremony, seething with anger and bent on taking revenge [1/268/2].

But after lots of theatrics and throwing of tantrums, he finally heard Lord Ram utter some mysterious words having a secret meaning which cast doubts in his mind. So, realizing that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human but some Divine Being in a human form, he gave him his own bow to test the truth about who Lord Ram actually was, and asked him to string this bow (6-7). The bow miraculously went into Lord Ram's hand by its own accord which caused a lot of amazement and perplexity to Parashuram (8). It was then that Parashuram realised the true nature of Lord Ram (as being Lord Vishnu himself). This realisation filled the sage with immense joy. He uttered prayerful words with the palms of his hands joining each other as a sign of great respect and honour for the Lord standing in front of him (Doha 1/284).

Thereafter, after paying due obeisance to the Lord, the sage proclaimed the Lord's divine glory several times over, and then went back to the forest to do Tapa (contemplate, meditate, observe austerity and perform penances) (1/285/7).

[Note—The bow that Parashuram gave to Lord Ram was actually the one held by Lord Vishnu. It was called Sarang. It was a miraculous bow, and as soon as the sage gestured to give it to Ram the bow went to its original Lord on its own. We must remember that everything that it related to the Supreme Being has a special quality in it; all of them are empowered and possess dynamism. This bow was not an inanimate object like other bows, but was a lively weapon full of energy and dynamism. This single event proved to the sage that he is dealing not with an ordinary prince but the Lord of the universe. Well, the sage should have thought of it before—he should have realised that it cannot be an ordinary man who could break the Bow of Shiva, and therefore he should not have behaved the way he did. But then this is another instance of the maverick play of Maya—the delusions created by the Lord himself. It so happened that sage Parashuram had become very arrogant and haughty because he had been able to subdue all the great emperors and king on the surface of the earth. The Lord wished to bring him back to his senses—and therefore the Lord used this opportunity to teach him a lesson.]

The Barvai Ramayan describes the way Sita's dear friends enjoy the sight of Sita feeling shy standing before Lord Ram after the bow was broken in verse nos. 17-18 as follows—

का घूँघट मुख मूदह नवला नारि ।
चाँद सरग पर सोहत यहि अनुहारि ॥17॥

17-[After the marriage, the friends of Sita tease her when they found that she had her eyes cast down out of modesty and was not looking Sri Ram straight in the face—] 'Oh young woman who is transfixed and dazed in awe and wonder! Why are you hesitantly hiding your face with your veil? A moon similar to him (Sri Ram's face) adorns the sky and do you not look at it/ [So, why don't you look up and feel blessed at having the opportunity of viewing the lovely face of Lord Ram at so close a quarter? Why don't you enjoy this most enchanting sight, and why are you shying away from it?]

गरब करहु रघुनंदन जनि मन माहँ ।
देखहु आपनि मूरति सिय कै छाहँ ॥18॥

18-[Then Sita's friends turn to Sri Ram to poke fun at him—] 'Oh Raghunandan! Do not be proud (of your beauty) in your heart. Your image (complexion) is dark as if it was only a shadow of Sita. See it for your self.'

[Lord Ram has a dark complexion like the rain-bearing cloud as compared to that of Sita which is golden and fair. The lady friends of Sita are teasing the Lord as a fun and a joke during their first meeting with the Lord. But come to think of it—how fortunate were they! They were watching the Lord of the universe at so close quarters. They were standing right in the front of the Lord who is believed to be inaccessible to the greatest of sages and hermits. Indeed, they were lucky. Herein lies the great secret of an incarnation—it helps ordinary people to come in close contact with the Supreme Being once in a while who would otherwise have been accessed by extreme of measures such as

hard penance, austerity, meditation, observance of strict religious vows, undergoing sufferance and undertaking so many other steps that are sanctioned and prescribed in the scriptures for this purpose.]

{When the Bow was broken it was finally decided that Sita would be married to Lord Ram. So king Janak sent a messenger to convey the good news to king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, and request him to come to Janakpur to attend the marriage ceremony. }

Invitation to Ram's father Dasrath to come to Janakpur; Departure of the marriage party from Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

दूत अवधपुर पठवहु जाई। आनहिं नृप दसरथहि बोलाई।।1
मुदित राउ कहि भलेहिं कृपाला। पठए दूत बोलि तेहि काला।।2 [1/287/1-2]

King Janak sent a messenger to Ayodhya to invite king Dasrath to come with his party to attend the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.

दोहा- चढ़ि चढ़ि रथ बाहेर नगर लागी जुरन बरात।
होत सगुन सुंदर सबहि जो जेहि कारज जात।। [Doha 1/299]

The news was most warmly received, and king Dasrath along with his kin, ministers and citizens of Ayodhya began assembling outside the city for the Barat (marriage party). They rode on chariots. At that time, auspicious omens occurred to anyone who went out to do any work. [1/299]

Arrival of Marriage party at Janakpur: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- आवत जानि बरात बर सुनि गहगहे निसान।
सजि गज रथ पदचर तुरग लेन चले अगवान।। [1/304]

When the news of the arrival of the groom's marriage party reached Janakpur, and the sound of beating of the kettle-drums was heard in the city, king Janak sent out an ambassador to receive the party. He was accompanied by elephants, chariots, footmen, horses—all duly decorated and equipped for the occasion [1/304].

{Tulsidas has described the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita in great detail and finesse in his two classical works—one is known as 'Janki Mangal', and the other is known as 'Ram Lala Nahachu'. Both of these books have been published separately by this author.

Meanwhile, we shall here restrict ourselves to the other books being cited for the purpose of narration. }

Lord Ram's marriage to Sita:

Geetawali—Verse no. 1/96—

जयमाल जानकी जलजकर लई है।
 सुमन सुमंगल सगुनकी बनाइ मंजु,
 मानहु मदनमाली आपु निरमई है॥ 1॥
 राज—रुख लखि गुर भूसुर सुआसिनिन्ह,
 समय—समाजकी ठवनि भली ठई है।
 चलीं गान करत, निसान बाजे गहगहे,
 लहलहे लोयन सनेह सरसई है॥ 2॥
 हनि देव दुंदुभी हरषि बरषत फूल,
 सफल मनोरथ भौ, सुख—सुचितई है।
 पुरजन—परिजन, रानी—राउ प्रमुदित,
 मनसा अनूप राम—रूप—रंग रई है॥ 3॥
 सतानंद—सिष सुनि पाँय परि पहिराई,
 माल सिय पिय—हिय, सोहत सो भई है।
 मानसतें निकसि बिसाल सुतमालपर,
 मानहुँ मरालपाँति बैठी बनि गई है॥ 4॥
 हितनिके लाहकी, उछाहकी, बिनोद—मोद,
 सोभाकी अवधि नहि अब अधिकई है।
 याते बिपरीत अनहितनकी जानि लीबी
 गति, कहै प्रगट, खुनिस खासी खई है॥ 5॥
 निज निज बेदकी सप्रेम जोग—छेम—मई,
 मुदित असीस बिप्र बिदुषनि दई है।
 छबि तेहि कालकी कृपालु सीतादूलहकी
 हुलसति हिये तुलसीके नित नई है॥ 6॥

Verse no. 1/96—Sita has the Jaimaal (the victory garland) in her hands—a beautiful garland which has been strung by Kamdeo-cupid himself disguised as a gardener who used beautiful flowers of exceptional charm and a lovely thread to create this magnificent garland for this auspicious occasion (1).

Seeing that the king (Janak) has given his approval, his Guru Shatanand, Brahmins and virtuous ladies moved forward towards the place where Lord stood. They had all the auspicious paraphernalia suitable for the occasion with them, and had Sita in the lead. All of them were singing auspicious and felicitous songs. At that instant, musical instruments started playing enchanting music, while affection dripped from the eyes of all those who were anxious, eager and excited to have a Darshan (a glimpse) of Lord Ram alongside Sita (2).

The Gods sounded their kettle-drums and trumpets in the heaven, and happily showered flowers upon the gathering. Having their wishes fulfilled (that Lord Ram should marry Sita), the Gods are experiencing a lot of joy, exhilaration, contentedness, bliss and mental peace. The inhabitants of the city, the servants and the subordinates, and the queen and the king (Sunaina and Janak) are all greatly delighted. All of them are captivated and held in thrall by the magnificence of the Lord's presence, by the

immensity of his beauty and grace, by the profundity of his glory and fame which are of varied hues like flowers of many colours (3).

Thereafter, on the advice of her Guru Shatanand, Sita dropped at the feet (i.e. touched the feet) of Sri Ram, and garlanded her beloved. She looks so splendid, so magnificent and so lovely standing by the side of Lord Ram as if a row of royal swans have emerged one after the other from the Mansarovar lake (in the Himalayas) and have perched themselves in a row on a beautiful Tamaal (the black catechu) tree to decorate it. [Here, since the complexion of Sri Ram is dark, he is likened to a Tamal tree, while Sita with her fair complexion is compared to the swan. The rising of her after bending to touch the feet of Sri Ram, her stretching and lifting of the arms so as to raise the garland above the Lord's head and then slipping it down to his neck and draping it on his shoulders and chest is compared here to the swans coming out of the lake, then swarming towards the black catechu tree, and then finally settling on it. The poetic imagination and similes used by Tulsidas are indeed brilliant and remarkable.] (4).

To those who have affection and endearment for the Lord, there is no other greater and opportune moment to rejoice, to feel exhilarated and ecstatic, and to enjoy the magnificence and grandeur of such a happy occasion in life. But on the contrary, those who have malice, envy, jealousy and opposition towards the Lord—their condition, behaviour and demeanours should be considered just the opposite. Anger and jealousy apparently appear to have fully devoured them. [This stanza refers respectively to the citizens of Janakpur who are absolutely happy and charmed at this auspicious turn of events on the one hand, and to the defeated kings and princes who could not break the Bow and felt frustrated and humiliated on the other hand.] (5).

Then, expert Brahmins gave blessings using (i.e. invoking) the hymns of the respective Vedas in which they were qualified. Tulsidas avers that the charming image of the merciful, compassionate and gracious 'Sita-Pati' (literally, the husband or beloved of Sita) as he appeared on that happy occasion remains fresh in his heart, and this magnificent sight of that instant keeps emerging afresh every day in his mind and heart (6).

Ram Charit Manas:

प्रमुदित मुनिन्ह भाँवरी फेरीं। नेगसहित सब रीति निबेरीं॥७
राम सीय सिर सेंदुर देहीं। सोभा कहिं न जाति बिधि केहीं॥८ [1/325/7-8]

After customary rejoicing and fanfare, the main ritual of marriage was performed by happy sages who made Ram and Sita go around the sacred fire seven times (a ritual that is known as 'Bhanwari Feri'). [This rite basically means that the marriage is solemnised with the fire God as witness]. All other rituals were duly done, and ceremonial gifts were given (7).

Thereafter, Lord Ram applied the red vermillion powder (made of red oxide of mercury) on the forehead of Sita - a sight so full of charm and exemplary beauty that it was beyond description. [This red powder is applied to the forehead and the hair line as a

mark an auspicious mark put on the head of a lady by his husband. All married women wear it, and it is one of the most important parts of the marriage ritual.] [1/325/7-8].

Thus, Sita was married to Lord Ram with full grandour and solemnity.

Geetawali: Verse no. 1/106/1-2—

दूलह राम, सीय दुलही री !
 घन-दामिन बर बरन, हरन-मन सुंदरता नखसिख निबही, री।।।
 ब्याह-बिभूषन-बसन-बिभूषित, सखि अवली लखि ठगि सी रही, री।
 जीवन-जनम-लाहु, लोचन-फल है इतनोइ, लहो आजु सही, री।। 2 [1/106/1-2]

Verse no. 1/106/1-2—The friends and maids of Sita converse with each other joyously and happily exclaim—‘Oh dear! Lord Ram is the groom and Sita the bride! They are related to each other like the dark cloud (Lord Ram's dark complexion) is to the lightening (Sita's fair, dazzling countenance).’ [Lightening is a part of the dark rain-bearing cloud. A cloud that has no lightening is not as dynamic as the one in which streaks of lightening constantly shine. Thus, here it means that both Lord Ram and Sita compliment and supplement each other.] (1)

Seeing the two (Sita and Ram) attired in full marriage regalia and decorative paraphernalia, the whole company was enthralled by their fabulous beauty, they were enraptured by this magnificent sight. Indeed, they got the full worth of their eyes and the fruit of life by witnessing this auspicious and glorious event (2). [1/106/1-2].

{Sita was no ordinary princess. She was Goddess Laxmi herself manifested in her form. So her marriage with Lord Ram, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was certain as the two are eternally inseparable from one another. As regards the beauty of Sita, Tulsidas has summed it up in the Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 9-13. These two-line verses are brief but beautiful to read. So let's read them. }

Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 9-13—

केस मुकुत सखि मरकत मनिमय होत ।
 हाथ लेत पुनि मुकुता करत उदोत ।।9।।

9-[Tulsidas now briefly describes the adorable image of Sita. The women folk of Janakpur say to each other—] 'Oh Friend! The pearls—which are used to decorate the plaits on the head of Sita—look like beads of emerald, but when taken in the hands, they resume their white radiance or glow'. [Here, the pearls are reflecting the blue-tinged complexion of Sri Ram's body because Sita is of a fair complexion, as is clear in the following verse.]

सम सुबरन सुषमाकर सुखद न थोर ।
 सिय अंग सखि कोमल कनक कठोर ।।10।।

10-'Oh Friend! (Comparing Sita's complexion with gold, she says) The gold can be compared to the complexion of Sita in radiance and glow, but it is no match for her in giving solace, succour, peace, happiness and bliss to the creature. Besides this, Sita's body is tender while the gold is a hard metal'.

[Note—Gold is a worldly thing, a material thing. It can give physical comfort to the body, but it cannot give spiritual peace and happiness. On the contrary, gold, which symbolizes worldly riches, only creates and then increases problems and worries as well as greed for more in the person who owns it, and heart-burn for others who become jealous of him. This robs the person of his internal peace. On the contrary, if Goddess Laxmi, who is the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, is pleased with him it is certain that such a man would not have to suffer from any wants while maintaining his peace and happiness. A man hoards gold to meet his financial emergencies, but this gold can be a cause of problem for him—such as getting killed by thieves. But when goddess Laxmi personified as Sita is benevolent upon him, he will be well provided for without the botheration of worrying for his hoard of gold.]

सिय मुख सरद कमल जिमि किमि कहि जाइ ।
निसि मलीन वह निसि दिन यह बिगसाइ ॥11॥

11-How can Sita's face be compared to the lotus flower as it appears during the winter season, because the latter shrivels up and closes (i.e. becomes gloomy) during the night whereas the former is uniformly and eternally cheerful, charming and radiant (and literally blooming like an evergreen flower).

चंपक हरवा अंग मिलि अधिक सोहाइ ।
जानि परै सिय हिवरें जब कुँभिलाइ ॥12॥

12-A garland of Champa flowers (a tree called *Michelia Champacca*, having yellow, fragrant flowers) adorning Sita's body looks very magnificent. It jells and merges perfectly with the radiant beauty and the glow of her body. It is only when the flowers dry up and wither away that its presence on her body becomes discernible. [This is because the withered flowers lose their charm and beauty, and then they stand in sharp contrast with the eternal beauty of Sita's skin.]

In other words, the yellow flowers of Champa harmonize perfectly with the golden complexion of Sita, but when they dry up, one can make them out as a separate entity when they begin to contrast against the glowing and healthy skin of Sita's body.

सिय तुव अंग रंग मिलि अधिक उदोत ।
हार बेल पहिरावौं चंपक होत ॥13॥

13-[Sita's friend tells her—] 'Sita! The garland of flowers that you wear gets enhanced in its beauty when it adorns your body. [That is, the same garland would not seem so beautiful and enchanting if it was seen separately from your body. When you wear it, its beauty is increased manifold.]

The wonder is that even when I put a garland of (white) Jasmine flowers on your body, it acquires the hue of the Champa flowers (which are yellow in colour). [That is, your skin is so radiant and glowing that even the white flowers of the garland appear to reflect the golden hue of your body. The reason is that the fresh flowers are glistening with drops of water, and their petals are fresh and taught, so they reflect the colour of Sita's glowing complexion.]

Brothers' marriage: Ram Charit Manas

जसि रघुबीर ब्याह बिधि बरनी। सकल कुँअर ब्याहे तेहिं करनी। [1/326/1]

All the other three brothers of Lord Ram (i.e. Laxman, Bharat, Shatrughan) were married according to the same process as had been followed by Lord Ram. [1/326/1]

छन्द मांडवी श्रुतकीरति उरमिला कुअँरि लई हँकारि कै॥6
 कुसकेतु कन्या प्रथम जो गुन सील सुख सोभामई॥ 7
 सब रीति प्रीति समेत करि सो ब्याहि नृप भरतहि दर्ई॥ 8
 जानकी लघु भगिनी सकल सुंदरि सिरोमनि जानि कै॥ 9
 सो तनय दीन्ही ब्याहि लखनहि सकल बिधि सनमानि कै॥10
 जेहि नामु श्रुतकीरति सुलोचनि सुमुखि सब गुन आगरी॥ 11
 सो दर्ई रिपुसूदनहि भूपति रूप सील उजागरी॥ 12 [1/325/छ.6-12]

Receiving sage Vashistha's permission, King Janak sent for all the other three princesses-Mandavi, Srutkirti, and Urmila (6). The eldest daughter of Janak's younger brother Kusketu, named Mandavi who had all the good virtues, was graceful, provided happiness to all and was most charming, was married to Bharat with all the rites and due love (7-8). Sita's younger sister Urmila who was regarded as being most beautiful amongst them all, was married to Laxman (9-10), while Srutkirti, the youngest of the four princesses of Janak's household, and who was famed for her beautiful eyes and pretty face, was married to Shatrughan. [Kand 1, Doha 325, Chanda lines 6-12.]

Departure of marriage party from Janakpur for Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

राम बिदा मागत कर जोरी। कीन्ह प्रनामु बहोरि बहोरी॥3
 पाइ असीस बहुरि सिरु नाई। भाइन्ह सहित चले रघुराई॥4 [1/337/3-4]

Finally, when the time for departure of the marriage party arrived, Lord Ram, alongwith his brothers, asked his father-in-law's permission to proceed to Ayodhya, and repeatedly

paid respects to him (3). After receiving his blessings, and once again paying due respect to his father-in-law king Janak, Lord Ram proceeded to Ayodhya along with his brothers (and their brides, as well as the marriage party) [1/337/3-4]

Arrival at Ayodhya and celebrations: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- बीच-बीच बर बास करि मग लोगन्ह सुख देत।
अवध समीप पुनीत दिन पहुँची आइ जनेत॥ [Doha 1/343]

The marriage party halted at convenient spots en-route to Ayodhya so that the subjects of the kingdom who lived in areas through which the party passed could participate in the rejoicings and derive happiness from this auspicious event (of the marriage of the four princes of their king Dasrath). Finally, the marriage party arrived near Ayodhya on an auspicious date (1/343).

दोहा- होहिं सगुन बरषहिं सुमन सुर दुंदभी बजाइ।
बिबुध बधू नाचहिं मुदित मंजुल मंगल गाइ॥ [Doha 1/347]

At the time when Lord Ram and his brothers, along with their brides, entered Ayodhya, there were good omens in abundance. The Gods celebrated by showering flowers from the sky and beating their drums to rejoice; the celestial dames danced in joyous abundance and sang melodious songs of to commemorate this auspicious occasion [1/347].

दोहा- एहि बिधि सबही देत सुखु आए राजदुआर।
मुदित मातु परिछनि करहिं बधुन्ह समेत कुमार॥ [Doha 1/348]

This way, gladdening and pleasing the heart of all and sundry on the way, they (Ram and his brothers along with their brides) arrived at the entrance of the Royal Palace. The delighted mothers did rituals suitable for the occasion, such as making offerings and showing or waving ceremonial lighted lamps as a sign of good omen and welcome. [1/348].

Geetawali: Raag Kaanhara—Verse no. 1/109—

भुजनिपर जननी वारि—फेरि डारी।
क्यों तोर्यो कोमल कर—कमलनि संभु—सरासन भारी ?॥ 1॥
क्यों मारीच सुबाहु महाबल प्रबल ताडका मारी ?
मुनि—प्रसाद मेरे राम—लषनकी बिधि बड़ी करवर टारी॥ 2॥
चरनरेनु लै नयननि लावति, क्यों मुनिबधू उधारी।
कहौधौ तात ! क्यों जीति सकल नृप बरी है बिदेहकुमारी॥ 3॥
दुसह—रोष—मूरति भृगुपति अति नृपति—निकर खयकारी।
क्यों सौँप्यो सारंग हारि हिय, करी है बहुत मनुहारी॥ 4॥

उमगि—उमगि आनंद बिलोकति बधुन सहित सुत चारी।
तुलसिदास आरती उतारति प्रेम—मगन महतारी ॥ 5 ॥

Verse no. 1/109—[Note—In this ballad, Tulsidas has summarized the achievements of Sri Ram till his marriage. It is noteworthy that only those aspects of his feats, which showed his supernatural and exemplary courage, bravery and divine powers, have been listed here.]

On arrival at the palace gates, the mother (Kaushalya) came out to welcome and receive Sri Ram and Sita. She embraced his arms and shoulders, and said, ‘I wonder, how you could break the heavy Bow of Lord Shiva with these tender, delicate and soft hands! (1).

How could you slay powerful demoness Tadka and the demon named Subahu, and also banish Marich with these arms? God had, with the blessings of sage Vishwamitra, repulsed a great danger to my beloved son.’ (2).

She then put some dust of Sri Ram’s feet to her eyes and asked, ‘Say, how could you liberate Ahilya with this dust? And how could you vanquish all the princes and marry Janki (3).

Parashuram is an embodiment of anger and is an exterminator of kings, say how could he be defeated and had handed over his own bow to you, and also prayed and asked forgiveness from you?’ (4).

Tulsidas says in this way, the mother showed the brothers and their brides the ceremonial lights of welcome and good omen, while seeing them again and again, brimming over with affection and love (5).”

Geetawali: Verse no. 1/110—

मुदित—मन आरती करै माता।
कनक—बसन—मनि वारि—वारि करि पुलक प्रफुल्लित गाता ॥ 1 ॥
पालागनि दुलहियन सिखावति सरिस सासु सत—साता।
देहिं असीस ते ‘बरिस कोटि लगि अचल होउ अहिबाता’ ॥ 2 ॥
राम सीय—छबि देखि जुबतिजन करहि परसपर बाता।
अब जान्यो साँचहू सुनहु, सखि ! कोबिद बड़ो बिधाता ॥ 3 ॥
मंगल—गान निसान नगर—नभ आनंद कह्यो न जाता।
चिरजीवहु अवधेस—सुवन सब तुलसिदास—सुखदाता ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 1/110—Mother Kaushalya is exceptionally delighted and euphoric. She liberally gives away gold, clothes, precious gems and jewels as alms and charities, and performs Arti (ceremonial showing of lamps as a token or symbol of welcome and auspiciousness) of the Lord with great affection, with a thrilled body and a mind that is full of happiness and cheer (1).

She teaches the brides to reverentially touch the feet of the other 700 mother-in-laws, and all of them bless them (the brides) thus—‘We bless you that your husbands live for a million years, and remain healthy throughout their lives.’ (2).

Seeing the pretty and charming image of Sri Ram and Sita, the maids and ladies of the royal household talk with each other, saying—‘Oh Friend! Listen, it is now that we realise that the creator is very clever indeed!’ [Why? Because when he decided in fate that Lord Ram and Laxman would go with sage Vishwamitra to the forest, we all were extremely sad and worried about them. But come to think of it, they would not have married such beautiful wives if they hadn’t gone. The creator is also very clever that he arranged things in such a manner that all the four brothers got married together.] (3).

Auspicious songs are being sung in the city and the sky (heavens), and musical instruments are too being played. One cannot describe the intensity of joy, euphoria, exultation and exhilaration that swept all over on that auspicious moment and the eventful day. Everyone blesses that all the sons of the king of Avadh (i.e. king Dasrath), who are the bestower of happiness and joy to Tulsidas, should have a long life (4).”

Ram Charit Manas:

दोहा- आए ब्याहि रामु घर जब तैं। बसइ अनंद अवध सब तब तैं।।5
प्रभु बिवाहँ जस भयउ उछाहू। सकहिं न बरनि गिरा अहिनाहू।।6 [1/361/5-6]

From the day Lord Ram came to Ayodhya duly married, all the joys found their abode in the Kingdom (5).

The festivities and joyous celebrations that followed his marriage were so profound that Goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of speech) and Lord of Serpents (Sheshnath) could not find words to describe it (6). [1/361/5-6]

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Chapter 4

Ayodhya Kand

{This chapter deals with the following events in Lord Ram's life :- Plans to anoint Lord Ram as the Prince Regent of Ayodhya, mischief of his step mother Kaikeyi at the instigation of her maid Manthara, Lord Ram's 14 year exile into forest, his exit from Ayodhya along with Sita and Laxman, sojourn at Chitrakoot, death of king Dasrath, arrival of Bharat at Ayodhya and his refusal to accept the crown, Bharat's departure for Chitrakoot to bring Lord Ram back, the two brother's meeting, and Bharat's return to Ayodhya with Lord Ram's sandals which were put on the throne as representative of Lord Ram himself.

It is called 'Ayodhya' Kand because this phase of the life of Lord Ram revolves around the events at Ayodhya, the capital city.}

Plans for anointing Ram as Prince Regent: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- सब के उर अभिलाषु अस कहहिं मनाइ महेसु।
 आप अछत जुबराज पद रामहि देउ नरेसु।। [Doha 2/1.]
 सब बिधि गुरु प्रसन्न जियँ जानी। बोलेउ राउ रहँसि मृदु बानी।।1
 नाथ रामु करिअहिं जुबराजू। कहिअ कृपा करि करिअ समाजू।।2
 मोहि अछत यहु होइ उछाहू। लहहिं लोग सब लोचन लाहू।।3 [2/4/1-3]

All the citizen of Ayodhya had a great desire that King Dasrath should appoint Lord Ram as Prince Regent during his own life-time, and they prayed to Lord Shiva (that this wish of theirs should fructify) [Doha 2/1].

So, finding an auspicious time, the king approached his family Guru Vashistha (to consult him and seek his blessings). Finding the Guru pleased in all respects and in a good mood, the king spoke to him most politely, 'My Lord, let Lord Ram be vested with the powers of a Prince Regent, and give orders so that necessary arrangements can be made. Let this happy event take place while I'm alive, so that the people could get the fruit of their eye sight (i.e. they could see Ram on the throne themselves and enjoy the happy event which they are all very are eagerly looking forward to) [2/4/1-3].

Geetawali: Raag Sorath—Verse no. 2/1

नृप कर जोरि कह्यो गुर पाहीं।
 तुम्हरी कृपा असीस, नाथ! मेरी सबै महेस निबाहीं।।1
 राम होहिं जुवराज जियत मेरे, यह लालच मन माहीं।
 बहुरि मोहिं जियबे-मरिबेकी चित चिंता कछु नाहीं।।2
 महाराज, भलो काज बिचार्यो बेगि बिलंब न कीजै।
 बिधि दाहिनो होइ तौ सब मिलि जनम-लाहु लुटि लीजै।।3
 सुनत नगर आनंद वधावन, कैकेयी विलखानी।
 तुलसीदास देवमायाबस कठिन कुटिलता ठानी।।4 [2/1]

Verse no. 2/1—King Dasrath approached his Guru Vashistha with folded hands, 'Oh Lord! By your blessings, Lord Shiva has fulfilled all my wishes. [My four sons have been married.] (1). Now I have only one more desire left—and it is that Lord Ram be appointed Prince Regent while I am alive; I shall not be worried about life or death thereafter (2).'

Vashistha replied, 'Oh King! You have thought of a noble work. Do it soon, don't delay and don't procrastinate. If God is favourable, then enjoy this happy event of your life along with others (3).'

Tulsidas says that when Kaikeyi heard of this good news that sent waves of jubilation in the masses of the city of Ayodhya, she unfortunately became uneasy instead of rejoicing, and as was destined in providence, thought of creating mischief (4). [2/1]

Kaikeyi's conspiracy: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- नामु मंथरा मंदमति चेरी कैकई केरि ।
अजस पेटारी ताहि करि गई गिरा मति फेरि ।। [Doha 2/12.]

Kaikeyi had a dim-witted, scheming and cunning maid servant with a pervert mind and a jealous temperament. Her name was Manthara, and she was very loyal to Kaikeyi. At the behest of the Gods (who wanted that Lord Ram should go to the forest and rid the earth of demons, and for this purpose it was necessary that he should be prevented from ascending the throne and be crowned as the Regent now), the Goddess of speech (Saraswati) corrupted Manthara's wisdom and intellect. [Doha 2/12].

करइ बिचारू कुबुद्धि कुजाती। होइ अकाजु कवनि बिधि राती।।3
भरत मातु पहिं गइ बिलखानी। का अनमनि हसि कह हँसि रानी।।5 [2/13/3,5]
रामहि तिलक कालि जौं भयऊ। तुम्ह कहूँ बिपति बीजु बिधि बयऊ।6
जो सुत सहित करहु सेवकाई। तौ घर रहहु न आन उपाई।।8 [2/19/6,8]
दुइ बरदान भूप सन थाती। मागहु आजु जुड़ावहु छाती।।5
सुतहि राजु रामहिं बनबासू। देहु लेहु सब सवति हुलासू।।6 [2/22/5-6]
सुनहु प्रानप्रिय भावत जी का। देहु एक बर भरतहि टीका।।1
मागउँ दूसर बर कर जोरी। पुरवहु नाथ मनोरथ मोरी।।2
तापस बेष बिसेषि उदासी। चौदह बरिस रामु बनबासी।।3 [2/29/1-3]

That evil-minded, selfish, wily and low-born woman (Manthara) pondered how mischief could be created overnight (before the next day fixed for anointment of Lord Ram (2/13/3). Making a sullen and long face, she approached her mistress Kaikeyi who asked her the reason for her distress (2/13/5).

Manthara replied, 'If Ram's anointment as Prince Regent takes place tomorrow, God will have sown the seed for your agonies and distress (2/19/6). Unless you and your son Bharat agree to work as servants (of Ram and his mother), you would not be allowed to stay in this house [2/19/1]. If you wish to liberate yourself from it, I suggest that you should invoke the two boons that the king owes you—ask for them today, and bless your heart. [2/22/5-6].'

Thus instigated by the crooked and wily Manthara and terrified at the prospect of having to lead a life of ignominy and serfdom (under Kaushalya and Ram), Kaikeyi lost her power to think rationally and discriminate between the right and the wrong. With this corrupted intellect and failed wisdom, Kaikeyi asked king Dasrath to redeem for her the two boons which were long due. She said sternly and without compunctions—'My dear husband, listen to what pleases my heart. As per the first boon, appoint Bharat as the Prince Regent of Ayodhya and give the crown to him [2/29/1]. I request you with folded

hands to fulfill the second boon—and it is that you must send Ram to exile in forest for fourteen consecutive years dressed as a hermit.’ [2/29/2-3].

The Barvai Ramayan tells us in its simple two line verse no. 20 how the wicked Manthara, the maid servant of Kaikeyi, had instigate her.

सात दिवस भए साजत सकल बनाउ ।
का पूछहु सुठि राउर सरल सुभाउ ।।20 ।।

20-[The hunch-back maid Manthara instigates Kaikeyi, saying—] ‘Seven days have passed since all the paraphernalia required for anointing Ram as the prince regent of the kingdom of Ayodhya have been arranged (but you were kept in the dark). What do you ask me now—you are very simple-hearted (and don’t understand the gravity of the situation).’

[Manthara was jealous of Ram’s anointment to the throne of Ayodhya. She wanted that Bharat, the son of her mistress Kaikeyi should ascend the throne. Being wicked, of a crooked mind and pervert at heart, she thought that if Bharat would become a king she would enjoy more privileges than what she enjoys now—traditions and righteousness be damned. It so happened that Dasrath did not think of telling Kaikeyi about the event because it was a routine affair of the kingdom and strictly in accordance with the laws and rules of appointing the heir to the throne. He was not doing anything extraordinary. He did not find it necessary to tell her though he loved her very much. The irony of the situation is that Kaikeyi herself loved Sri Ram as much as she loved Bharat, her own son. This event of Kaikeyi being instrumental in Ram’s forest exile and the subsequent death of her husband Dasrath as well as the turmoil it created in its wake shows that when the time is bad even the most unexpected can happen. Besides this, one cannot take the people of the world for granted, and sometimes it happens that the dearest of people become one’s greatest of enemies.

Well, Manthara intends to tell Kaikeyi as follows—‘Don’t you realise that this fact of Ram’s anointment was concealed from you willingly by Dasrath? Why, did you ever ponder over it? It shows that the king has no faith in you; he does not trust you. You seem to take him for granted. If he loved you so much as you believe he does, then what did he not tell you about the plan of anointing Ram on the throne of Ayodhya? Did he not know that it is a tradition that the eldest son is crowned, and so what fear did he have from you so as to conceal such an important decision? Was he suspicious of you and feared that you will create some problem for him? Obviously, Dasrath’s other wife Kaushalya hatched a conspiracy to sideline you by prevailing upon the king to appoint her son Ram on the throne because she is jealous of you and feared that if the king had his way he would appoint Bharat instead of Ram. She blackmailed him somehow, and that is why the confused Dasrath hid this news from you. Had everything been above board, he should have called you queens for a joint meeting and divulged his plans and built a consensus on the issue. Why did he not do so?

So beware—if Ram ascends the throne on the appointed day, then you will have bad days ahead. Don't blame me later on that I did not warn you.]

{When Sri Ram's mother Kaushalya heard of this, she was overwhelmed with sorrow and became extremely distraught. Her laments are really heart-wrenching.}

Geetawali: Raag Gauri—Verse no. 2/2—

सुनहु राम मेरे प्रानपियारे ।
 बारौ सत्य बचन श्रुति—सम्मत, जाते हौं बिछुरत चरन तिहारे ॥ 1 ॥
 बिनु प्रयास सब साधनको फल प्रभु पायो, सो तो नाहिं सँभारे ।
 हरि तजि धरमसील भयो चाहत, नृपति नारिबस सरबस हारे ॥ 2 ॥
 रुचिर काँचमनि देखि मूढ ज्यों करतलतें चिंतामनि डारे ।
 मुनि—लोचन—चकोर—ससि—राघव, सिव—जीवनधन, सोउ न बिचारे ॥ 3 ॥
 जद्यपि नाथ तात ! मायाबस सुखनिधान सुत तुम्हहिं बिसारे ।
 तदपि हमहि त्यागहु जनि रघुपति, दीनबंधु, दयालु, मेरे बारे ॥ 4 ॥
 अतिसय प्रीति बिनीत बचन सुनि, प्रभु कोमल चित चलत न पारे ।
 तुलसिदास जौ रहौं मातु—हित, को सुर—बिप्र—भूमि—भय टारे? ॥ 5 ॥

Verse no. 2/2—[Hearing that Sri Ram has decided to go to the forest for exile, Kaushalya became very sad, and she said soulfully with quiver in her voice—] 'Oh Ram, the beloved of my heart! Listen, I invoke the Vedas to stand witness to the truthfulness of my words, how pained and anguished I am to be separated (i.e. am forced to live away) from your (august and holy) feet. [I speak the truth that I am extremely sorrowful and pained to be forced by circumstances to live a life devoid of you and the opportunity to have the good fortune to see your divine form daily in my life. Why, I would not be able to see you now, and I cannot reconcile myself to this.] (1).

I had acquired the Supreme Lord who is the obtained as an auspicious reward of all Sadhans (paths, means and ways of emancipation and salvation). What an irony of fate that people (here referring to Kaikeyi and Dasrath) could not take care of the Lord living amidst them but pretend to be upholders of the laws of Dharma (the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct, truthfulness etc.).

[This is a caustic and a sarcastic remark against Dasrath. He had agreed to Kaikeyi's demand because otherwise he would be blamed as going back on his promise and being untruthful to his words, something that is ignoble and would give him a bad name. He agreed because by keeping his words he is upholding the laws of Dharma which ordains that if one promises something he must live up to his words notwithstanding the sufferings that it might entail. But in the process he forgot that he is sending an innocent son to the forest at the best of a cunning, wily, pervert, selfish and jealous woman. He forgot that his actions would cause suffering to thousands of his subjects and even to his other queens for no fault of theirs. Even if he might be held guilty of not keeping his words given to a cunning and evil-minded selfish woman who had exploited her closeness with him and his steadfast vows to be truthful to his words for her selfish goals, but the greater good that rescinding on his words would do to the

kingdom and his subjects who are preparing for Lord Ram's anointment would far outweigh this single sin. Didn't the king imagine the calamity that would descend on the kingdom and horrors of dismay and pain to which the citizens of Ayodhya would be subjected if he pretended to be truthful to his words? Didn't he imagine that he has been instructed by his Guru to make haste to anoint Ram to the throne, and by sending Ram to the forest he would be disobeying his Guru, which is a far greater sin than chiding a selfish lady?]

Alas! The king has lost everything under the influence of a crooked woman (Kaikeyi). [That is, Dasrath has lost his wisdom and intellect, he has lost his right to be called a loving father, he has lost his right to be equal to all the queens and his sons, he has lost the right to be called kind and graceful to all, he has lost the right to be called an upholder of Dharma, and he has lost the right to be a king who worries about the welfare of his subjects in a dispassionate manner.] (2).

King Dasrath's actions resemble a man who is so stupid as to drop a Chintamani (a gem said to possess power to remove worries) on seeing an artificial gem made of worthless glass. The king did not pay any attention to the fact that Sri Ram is so dear to the sages and saints that they fix their sight (attention and mind) on him just like the bird Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge) fixes its eyes on the moon. He even did not consider that Sri Ram is so dear to Shiva that he is like the latter's life, that Shiva cannot live without Ram. How unfortunate! (3).

[Kaushalya again ridicules her husband.] Oh Son! Though the lord (Dasrath) has abandoned you by being under the spell of Maya (delusions and infatuation with a wily woman, by being ignorant of your true nature as the incarnate Divine Being, and his unique luck of having you as his son), but oh my dear son Raghupati (Sri Ram), oh The friend of the distressed, the lowly, the meek, the downtrodden and the hapless creatures, oh the merciful, compassionate, gracious son! At least you should be wise enough not to abandon (forsake) us for no fault of ours.' (4).

[This pitiful pleading of Kaushalya is really very moving and heart wrenching. This pleading of his mother put Sri Ram in a quandary—] Tulsidas says that on hearing these most affectionate and affable words full of humble and earnest pleadings of his mother, the soft-hearted, the kind and loving, the merciful and compassionate Lord Sri Ram could not move from there. He began to ponder—'If I stay back to please my mother, who would remove the fears, the torments and the agonies being suffered by Gods, the Brahmins and the mother Earth (at the hands of the cruel demons)?'

[Ram was in a dilemma. On the one hand he would have to subject his mother and the rest of the subjects of the kingdom to the great agony of separation, and on the other hand there was the greater stake of liberating the world from the tyranny of demons.] (5).

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/3—

रहि चलिये सुंदर रघुनायक ।
जो सुत! तात-बचन-पालन-रत, जननिउ तात! मानिबे लायक ॥ १ ॥
बेद-बिदित यह बानि तुम्हारी, रघुपति सदा संत-सुखदायक ।
राखहु निज मरजाद निगमकी, हौं बलि जाऊँ, धरहु धनुसायक ॥ २ ॥
सोक कूप पुर परिहि, मरिहि नृप, सुनि सँदेस रघुनाथ सिधायक ।

यह दूसन बिधि तोहि होत अब रामचरन—बियोग—उपजायक ॥ ३ ॥
 मातु बचन सुनि स्रवत नयन जल, कछु सुभाउ जनु नरतनु—पायक ।
 तुलसीदास सुर—काज न साध्यौ तौ तो दोष होय मोहि महि आयक ॥ ४ ॥

Verse no. 2/3—[Kaushalya continues—] ‘Oh lovely Raghunayak (Sri Ram)! Son, please stay back. If you are so eager to keep the words of your father, then your mother should also be equally important, venerable and honoured by you. (How can you disobey her or cause pain to her heart?) (1).

It is renowned even in the Vedas that Raghupati (Sri Ram) always provides comfort, happiness, succour and joy to the saints (i.e. to those who are good, virtuous, righteous and noble). Hence, I invoke this grand virtue of yours. You should uphold these rules and traditions established and declared by the Vedas (and uphold their sanctity and decorum), and put down your bow and arrow. [That is, don’t go to the forest.] (2).

Remember son—as soon as the news of Raghunath’s (Sri Ram’s) departure (for the forest) spreads, the whole city will sink and drown in a well of sorrows and lamentations, and the king will also die. Oh the cruel Creator who is separating us from the feet of Sri Ram! Watch, this stain and ignominy is going to be cast upon you as well.’ (3).

Tulsidas says that on hearing these (heart-wrenching) wailings of the mother, tears began to roll down from the eyes of Sri Ram—partly because of human nature (because the Lord had to behave like an ordinary human to play his part properly) and partly because he was in a fix, not knowing what to do, for he thought that if he didn’t fulfill the object of his manifestation in a human body—which was to do the work of the Gods by killing the cruel demons—then that would be most objectionable (4).

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/4—

राम ! हौं कौन जतन घर रहिहौं ?
 बार बार भरि अंक गोद लै ललन कौनसों कहिहौं ॥ १ ॥
 इहि आँगन बिहरत मेरे बारे! तुम जो संग सिसु लीन्हें।
 कैसे प्रान रहत सुमिरत सुत, बहु बिनोद तुम कीन्हें ॥ २ ॥
 जिन्ह श्रवननि कल बचन तिहारे सुनि सुनि हौं अनुरागी।
 तिन्ह श्रवननि बनगवन सुनति हौं मोतें कौन अभागी? ॥ ३ ॥
 जुग सम निमिष जाहिं रघुनंदन, बदनकमल बिनु देखे।
 जौ तनु रहै बरष बीते, बलि कहा प्रीति इहि लेखे? ॥ ४ ॥
 तुलसीदास प्रेमबस श्रीहरि देखि बिकल महतारी।
 गदगद कंठ, नयन जल, फिरि—फिरि आवन कह्यो मुरारी ॥ ५ ॥

Verse no. 2/4—[Mother Kaushalya said—] ‘Ram! How would I stay in the house (without you)? Whom will I repeatedly embrace affectionately (or literally, lift in my lap) and call him ‘Son’? (1).

My dear! You used to move about in the palace courtyard accompanied with so many of your friends—Ah! Alas! How will I live and survive when I remember (recall) those pleasant days of your childhood plays? (2).

The ears through which I used to hear your pleasant and sweet words and used to be overwhelmed by love and affection, I am hearing the news of your exile to the forest with the same ears today! Say, who is indeed more unfortunate than me? (3).

Oh Raghunandan (Sri Ram)! Without seeing your lovely face, each moment would appear to be an age for me. Say, if this body of mine survives after the passage of (fourteen) long years (of your forest exile)—I say truthfully, how can it be said that it (my body, i.e. ‘me’) has any sort of love and affection for you?’ [That is, my body, however emaciated, may survive for fourteen long years in the expectation of seeing you once again. But if it lives after that, say how then can it be said that I have love for you? In other words, the mother seems to tell Ram in an indirect manner that if he does not return after the exile period of fourteen years for any reason whatsoever, then let him be sure that she would not live even for a moment after that.] (4).

Tulsidas says that on seeing the mother so woefully agitated, distressed, distraught, hapless and hopeless, Sri Hari (Sri Ram) became very anxious (because he got worried that she would die as soon as he leaves her). He became extremely upset emotionally. His throat choked, tears rolled down his eyes, and he repeatedly asserted to his mother that he would come back soon (5).”

{ When Sita and Laxman heard that their beloved Lord Sri Ram has been ordered to go to the forest, they made an instant decision—that they are going with the Lord.]

Sita's decision to accompany Ram: Ram Charit Manas—

दोहा- समाचार तेहि समय सुनि सीय उठी अकुलाइ।

जाइ सासु पद कमल जुग बंदि बैठि सिरु नाइ ॥ [2/57]

चलन चहत बन जीवननाथू । केहि सुकृती सन होइहि साथू ॥ [2/58/3]

मैं सुकुमारि नाथ बन जोगू । तुम्हहि उचित तप मो कहूँ भोगू ॥ [2/67/8]

देखि दसा रघुपति जियँ जाना । हठि राखें नहिं राखिहि प्राना ॥2

कहेउ कृपाल भानुकुलनाथा । परिहरि सोचु चलहु बन साथ ॥3 [2/68/2-3]

Sita heard the bad news and became very perplexed and agitated. She went to meet (and take permission) of her mother-in-law (Kaushalya) and sat down at her feet with bowed head (2/57). She reflected, and prayed to her mother-in-law earnestly that her husband (Lord Ram, the lord of her being) wants to proceed to the forest, so will she have the good fortune to accompany him? [2/58/3].

When Lord Ram tried to dissuade her from doing so (by citing a number of reasons), she answered—‘If austerity and penance is appropriate (fit, destined) for you, where do I get the right to live in luxury? So, oh Lord, if you suffer hardship in the forest, there is no justification for my living in luxury here in the palace.’ (2/67/8).

Seeing her pathetic condition and her determination, Lord Ram decided in his heart that she will not survive (and would die of grief) if left behind. So he asked her to give up lamenting and get ready to accompany him to the forest because it was not the moment to grieve. [2/68/2-3]

Geetawali : Verse no. 2/6—

कृपानिधान सुजान प्रानपति, संग बिपिन ह्वै आवोंगी।
 गृहते कोटि-गुनित सुख मारग चलत, साथ सचु पावोंगी।।1
 थाके चरनकमल चापौंगी, श्रम भए बाउ डोलावोंगी।
 नयन-चकोरनि मुखमयंक-छबि सादर पान करावोंगी।।2
 जौ हठि नाथ राखिहौ मोकहँ, तौ सँग प्रान पठावोंगी ?
 तुलसिदास प्रभु बिनु जीवत रहि क्यों फिरि बदन देखावोंगी ?।।3 [2/6]

Verse no. 2/6—Sita said to Ram, ‘I can, and will, stay with the ‘Lord of my life’ in the forest. [Don’t attempt to tell me about the hardships of the forest in order to frighten me off.] Walking with you on the path, truly, I shall feel thousands times happier than at home (1). When you get tired, I shall massage your weary legs, I shall fan you when you feel the heat, and my eyes shall treat upon the beauty of your face even as the bird Chakor gazes constantly at the moon (and feels extremely contented and amply rewarded) (2). And oh Lord, if you forcefully leave me behind, I shall send my soul with you (I shall die), for tell me what face would I have to show this world without you?’ (3).

Laxman's decision to accompany Ram: Ram Charit Manas

समाचार जब लछिमन पाए। ब्याकुल बिलख बदन उठि धाए। [2/70/1]
 मोरे सबइ एक तुम्ह स्वामी। दीनबंधु उर अंतरजामी।।6
 धरम नीति उपदेसिअ ताही। कीरति भूति सुगति प्रिय जाही।।7
 मन क्रम बचन चरन रत होई। कृपासिंधु परिहरिअ कि सोई।।8 [2/72/6-8]
 मागहु बिदा मातु सन जाई। आवहु बेगि चलहु बन भाई।।[2/73/1]

When Laxman heard the news, he got rattled and became agitated. Lamenting greatly, he immediately ran to meet Lord Ram (2/70/1). He said to Sri Ram, ‘Oh my Lord! For me (as far as I am concerned), you are the centre of all ties; I have no relations with anyone other than you; nothing matters to me except you. Oh Lord, you are the one who is friend of the humble and the distressed, and nothing is hidden from you as you are omniscient, you can read the inner feelings of all. [So you must know that I am not telling lies.] (2/72/6). Piety, laws, righteousness, noble conduct, duties etc. should be taught to one who is fond of acquiring glory, fortune and noble destiny, not to him who is the most devoted servant of your holy feet by his mind, deed and speech. Tell me, oh the merciful ocean of grace, should you abandon such a person (for whom you are everything and the core of life)?’ [1/72/7-8].

Lord Ram was very much moved at this earnest entreaty of Laxman. He said finally, 'Dear, go and take your leave from your mother (Sumitra), and come back to accompany me to the forest. [Yes, I will take you with me as I have agreed to take Sita along. I'll surely not disappoint you. Come dear, come along!] [2/73/1].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/11—

ठाढ़े हैं लषन कमलकर जोरे ।
 उर धकधकी, न कहत कछु सकुचनि, प्रभु परिहरत सबनि तृन तोरे ।।1
 कृपासिंधु अवलोकि बंधु तन, प्रान-कृपान बीर-सी छोरे ।
 तात बिदा माँगिए मातुसों, बनिहै बात उपाइ न औरै ।।2
 जाइ चरन गहि आयसु जाँची, जननि कहत बहुभाँति निहोरे ।
 सिय-रघुबर-सेवा सुचि ह्वै हौ तौ जानिहों, सही सुत मोरे ।।3
 कीजहु इहै बिचार निरंतर, राम समीप सुकृत नहि थोरे ।
 तुलसी सुनि सिष चले चकित-चित, उड़यो मानो विहग बधिक भए भोरे ।।4

Verse no 2/11—Sri Laxman stood motionless and speechless (in front of Lord Ram) with folded hands. With baited breath, he thinks, 'Alas! At this moment the Lord is breaking all ties. Now, I pray and wonder, would he also break his ties with me?' (1).

When Lord Ram saw the condition of Laxman and realised that he has drawn the dagger, so to say, and is ready to take his own life, is ready to strike and kill himself (if the Lord refused to take him along to the forest), the Lord told him, 'Dear brother, go and ask leave of your mother. This is the only way out.' (2).

When Laxman went to his mother and asked for her permission, she replied—'Oh Son, I shall consider you as being worthy of being called as 'my son' only if you purify yourself by serving Lord Ram and Sita (3). Always remember (while at forest) that to stay with Lord Ram is no less a deed of righteousness and purity than all other means put together.'

Tulsidas says that getting such a whole-hearted permission from his mother, Laxman flew, as it were, like a bird finding freedom from the clutches of a hunter as soon as the bird finds that hunter's attention is diverted or when he is careless (4). [2/11]

Ram's exit from Ayodhya for 14 year exile: Ram Charit Manas

रामु तुरत मुनि वेषु बनाई । चले जनक जननिहि सिरु नाई ।।8
 दोहा- सजि बन साजु समाजु सबु बनिता बंधु समेत ।
 बंदि बिप्र गुर चरन प्रभु चले करि सबहि अचेत । [2/79/8,0]
 एहि बिधि राम सबहि समुझावा । गुर पद पदुम हरषि सिरु नावा ।।1
 गनपति गौरि गिरीसु मनाई । चले असीस पाइ रघुराई ।।2 [2/81/1-2]
 तब सुपंत्र नृप बचन सुनाए । करि बिनती रथ रामु चढ़ाए ।।1
 चढ़ि रथ सीय सहित दोउ भाई । चले हृदयँ अवधहि सिरु नाई ।।2

चलत रामु लिखि अवध अनाथा। बिकल लोग सब लागे साथी ।।3 [2/83/1-3]
सहि न सके रघुबर बिरहागी। चले लोग सब ब्याकुल भागी।। [2/84/4]

When the final moment of departure came, Lord Ram dropped his royal regalia and donned himself up as a hermit. Bowing his head to his parents, he started on his journey for the forest [2/79/8]. Having thus prepared and equipped for the journey, Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and dear brother Laxman, bowed at the feet of Brahmins and their guru sage Vashistha, and then departed from the place for the onward journey, leaving everyone dumbfounded, stunned, agonized, perplexed, distressed, distraught and bewildered (2/79).

Lord Ram reassured everyone, telling them their moral duties and advising them to follow the path of righteousness. He once again and finally bowed at the feet of his Guru (Vashistha) once again. Then he offered his prayers to Lord Ganesh, Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva, received their blessings, and started for the journey to the forest [2/81/1-2].

Meanwhile, king Dasrath had sent behind Lord Ram his minister named Sumantra with his chariot to escort him. So Sumantra requested Lord Ram to mount on the chariot. To respect the sentiments of their father, the trio Sri Ram-Laxman-Sita boarded the chariot. Then they turned towards Ayodhya and finally bade it good-bye by bowing their heads towards the city (as a final gesture of parting and showing respect), and then they moved on swiftly ahead on the path towards the forest [2/83/1-2].

The citizens of Ayodhya were so distressed and grieved at being abandoned by their Lord that all started running behind the chariot because they found the agony of Ram's abandonment and separation from him too much a pain to bear [2/83/3, 2/84/4].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/1—

कीरके कागर ज्यों नृपचीर, बिभूषन उप्पम अंगनि पाई ।।1
औध तजी मगवासके रूख ज्यों, पंथके साथ ज्यों लोग लोगाई ।।2
संग सुबंधु, पुनीत प्रिया, मनो धर्मु क्रिया धरि देह सुहाई ।।3
राजिवलोचन रामु चले तजि बापको राजु बटाउ कीं नाई ।।4 [2/1]

Verse no. 2/1—After putting down the royal paraphernalia, robes and jewellery that he was adorned with, Lord Ram appeared as magnificent as the parrot after abandoning its wings (i.e. after flight) (1). He abandoned Ayodhya like the rest-houses along the path, and its citizens like the temporary companions of the wayside inns (2). Faithful and loyal brother (Laxman) and the devoted wife (Sita) appear as if Dharma (righteousness and noble conduct) has been personified in their forms (3). Lord Ram left his father's kingdom dispassionately as if it was someone else's property, and went to the forest cheerfully (4) [2/1]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/2—

कागर कीर ज्यों भूषन-चीर सरीरु लस्यो तजि नीरु ज्यों काई ।
मातु-पिता प्रिय लोग सबै सनमानि सुभायँ सनेह सगाई ।।

संग सुभामिनि, भाइ भलो, दिन द्वै जनु औध हुते पहुनाई।
राजिवलोचन रामु चले तजि बापको राजु बटाउ की नाई।।2।।

Verse no. 2/2—For the Lord, the royal clothes and ornaments were like the feathers of the parrot. After removing them from his body, he looked so magnificent and glorious as if scum had been removed from the water. Having lovingly and respectfully addressed his parents and kin according to their mutual relations and status, the lotus-eyed Lord Ram took his beautiful wife (Sita) and faithful brother (Laxman) with him, and left his father's kingdom like a stranger who had been a guest of the king for 2-3 days would have done.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/3—

सिथिल सनेह कहैं कौसिला सुमित्राजू सों,
मैं न लखी सौति, सखी! भगिनी ज्यों सेई है।
कहै मोहि मैया, कहौं-मैं न मैया, भरतकी,
बलैया लेहौं भैया, तेरी मैया कैकेई है।।
तुलसी सरल भायँ रघुरायँ माय मानी,
काय-मन-बानीहूँ न जानी कै मतेई है।
बाम बिधि मेरो सुखु सिरिस-सुमन-सम,
ताको छल-छुरी को-कुलिस लै टेई है।।3।।

Verse no. 2/3—Mother Kaushalya became overwhelmed with emotions and said to Sumitra, 'Oh friend! I had never treated Kaikeyi as a rival. I had always looked after her as my own sister. When Ram called me 'mother', I used to tell him that I was not his but Bharat's mother. 'Son', I used to say, 'I swear to you (i.e. tell you truly) that your mother is Kaikeyi.'

Lord Ram had also treated Kaikeyi as his own mother, and never as a step-mother. But the malignant and malevolent creator became jealous of our happy days, and so he mounted the knife of deceit, treachery and cunning and stabbed us with it (i.e. he corrupted the wisdom of Kaikeyi and forced her to send Ram to exile). [Kushalya laments that it is so astonishing that Kaikeyi whom Ram used to show more affection and love than he did to me, and she also reciprocated in equal terms, had suddenly become so cruel and heartless. Surely, it's not her fault but it is the crookedness of the creator who used her as a pawn in his evil design.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/4—

कीजै कहा, जीजी जू!सुमित्रा परि पायँ कहै,
तुलसी सहावै बिधि, सोई सहियतु है।
रावरो सुभाउ रामजन्म ही तैं जानियत,
भरतकी मातु को कि ऐसो चाहियतु है।।
जाई राजघर, ब्याहि आई राजघर माहँ,
राज-पूतु पाएहूँ न सुखु लहियतु है।
देह सुधागेह, ताहि मृगहूँ मलीन कियो,
ताहूँ पर बाहु बिनु राहु गहियतु है।।4।।

Verse no. 2/4—Sumitra fell at the feet of Kaushalya and said, ‘Sister! What can be done? We have to bear what the creator wishes. Your nature is known from the day Lord Ram was born, but should Kaikeyi have done what she did? Was it proper for her? You were born in the household of a king (as a princess), married a king (as wife of Dasrath), got a son (Lord Ram) who was most suitable and eligible to be crowned as a Regent, but still you could not enjoy happiness. See, the moon is a receptacle of Amrit (celestial elixir of happiness and eternity), but the deer has given it a bad name, and on top of it, the moon is gobbled-up by the arm-less Rahu (resulting it to be darkened during the lunar eclipse).’

The Barvai Ramayan sums up the somber moment of Lord Ram going to the forest very succinctly in its verse no. 21 as follows—

राजभवन सुख बिलसत सिय सँग राम ।
बिपिन चले तजि राज सो बिधि बड़ बाम ।।21।।

21-Sri Ram had been enjoying the various comforts of the palace along with Sita. But the same Ram left the kingdom for the forest (most happily, without any malice, hatred, regret or anger as if both were the same for him). The ways of the creator are very mysterious and incredulous.

[That is, no one knows what is written in one’s destiny. No one can be sure what awaits him in the future, and what providence has in store for him. The consequences or the result of deeds done by a person are bound to be suffered by him. Look at the case of Lord Ram himself. He was born as a royal prince; he was just a few hours away from being appointed to the throne. His step mother Kaikeyi loved him as much as she loved her own son Bharat. Even Bharat was innocent and he had the greatest of respects for Ram. All the citizens were happy, and even the Guru had issued instructions for his anointment. Then all of a sudden everything collapsed like a pack of cards. But the credit goes to the Lord that he did not show any kind of dismay or anger or hatred. He was as calm as before. The Lord was enlightenment, self-realisation and wisdom personified. He knew that the soul never suffers, and all these things such as the comfort of the kingdom and the pains and suffering of the forest are limited to the physical gross body which is not one’s truthful ‘self’. So it does not really matter whether one lives in a palace or in a forest.]

First day's halt at the banks of River Tamsa: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- बालक बृद्ध बिहाइ गृहँ लगे लोग सब साथ ।
तमसा तीर निवासु किय प्रथम दिवस रघुनाथ ।। [2/84]

The citizens accompanied Lord Ram (by running behind the chariot carrying the Lord), leaving behind their children and the old back at home. The first day's halt was at the bank of river Tamsa [2/84].

Ram's leaving in the darkness of night: Ram Charit Manas

किए धरम उपदेस घनेरे। लोग प्रेम बस फिरहिं न फेरे ।।4
 लोग सोग श्रम बस गए सोई। कछुक देवमायाँ मति मोई ।।6
 जबहिं जाम जुग जामिनी बीती। राम सचिव सन कहेउ सप्रीती ।।7
 खोज मारि रथु हाँकहु ताता। आन उपायँ बनिहि नहिं बाता ।।8
 दोहा- राम लखनसिय जान चढ़ि संभु चरन सिरु नाइ ।
 सचिवँ चलायउ तुरत रथु इत उत खोज दुराइ ।। [Chaupai lines 2/85/4,6-8, Doha 85.]

Lord Ram tried all means to persuade the citizens to return back home. He gave them various instructions on their moral duties and righteousness, but they were so deeply in love of him that they refused to obey (return) [4]. Since all entreaties and attempts to persuade them failed to yield result, the only way out of this dilemma for the Lord was to dodge them while they were fast asleep because of weariness, grief and distress (5).

Lord Ram, therefore, ordered his charioteer Sumantra, after two-measures of the night had passed (i.e. around mid night), saying—‘Father (Sumantra was an old and trusted minister and friend of Dasrath, hence this address)! Ride off from this place as quickly as you can, and in such a way so as to confuse the tracks (so no one would know in which direction we proceed).’ [2/85/4.6-8].

Having said this, Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita boarded the chariot after bowing their head to Lord Shiva, and the charioteer immediately started the chariot and drove it in such a way that it could not be traced later on [Doha 2/85].

Arrival at Sring-ber-pur: Ram Charit Manas

सीता सचिव सहित दोउ भाई। सृंगबेरपुर पहुँचे जाई ।।
 उतरे राम देवसरि देखी। कीन्ह दंडवत हरषु बिसेषी ।।2 [2/87/1-2]

The next morning, Lord Ram, along with Sita, his brother (Laxman) and minister (Sumantra) reached Sring-ber-pur on the banks of river Ganges. They got down from the chariot and paid their respect to the holy river by prostrating on the ground [2/87/1-2].

Night's halts (IInd night): Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- सिय सुमंत्र भ्राता सहित कंद मूल फल खाइ।
 सयन कीन्ह रघुबंसमनि पाय पलोटत भाइ ।। [Doha 2/89.]

That night (the 2nd night) they slept at Sring-ber-pur after taking supper consisting of edible bulb, roots and fruits. Lord Ram slept, while Laxman kneaded and massaged his legs (to remove the Lord's tiredness). [Doha 2/89].

Matting of hairs on the head like a hermit by Lord Ram and Laxman, and return of Sumantra to Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

सकल सौच करि राम नहावा। सुचि सुजान बट छीर मगावा।।३
अनुज सहित सिर जटा बनाए। देखि सुमंत्र नयन जल छाए।।४ [2/94/3-4]

The next morning, after finishing his daily purification acts and bathing, Lord Ram asked for milk of the banyan tree. Then he and Laxman matted their hairs like a hermit, the sight of which filled the eyes of Sumantra with tears. [2/94/3-4].

[Note : At the time of departure from Ayodhya, Lord Ram had discarded his royal robes and donned the attire of a hermit, but the matting of hair was done here.]

राम लखन सिय पद सिरु नाई। फिरेउ बनिक जिमि मूर गवाँई।।८
दोहा- रथु हाँकेउ हय राम तन हेरि हेरि हिहिनाहिं।
देखि निषाद बिषादबस धुनहिं सीस पछिताहिं।। [Chaupai lines 2/99/8, Doha 99.]

Then, Lord Ram asked Sumantra to return, which he did most reluctantly. Bowing his head at the feet of Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita, he returned, dejected and crest fallen like a merchant who had lost his entire capital (8). As the chariot turned towards Ayodhya, even the horses repeatedly turned their heads to look at Lord Ram and wept (i.e. they neighed in dismay and did not want to turn their backs on the Lord, but were forced to do so). Overcome with grief at this sight, even Nishad (the chieftain of Sringeri-pur) beat his head and lamented woefully [Chaupai lines 2/99/8, Doha 99].

Ram's crossing of river Ganges: Ram Charit Manas

बरबस राम सुमंत्र पठाए। सुरसरि तीर आपु तब आए।। [2/100/2]
केवट राम रजायसु पावा। पानि कठवता भरि लेइ आवा।।६
दोहा- पद पखारि जलु पान करि आपु सहित परिवार।
पितर पारु करि प्रभुहि पुनि मुदित गयउ लेइ पार।। [Chaupai lines 2/101/6, Doha 101.]
उतरि ठाढ़ भए सुरसरि रेता। सीय रामु गुह लखन समेता।। [2/102/1]

After forcefully sending Sumantra back to Ayodhya, Lord Ram arrived at the banks of river Ganges [2/100/2]. The boatman brought a wooden basin full of water [2/101/6], washed the Lord's feet, and thereby helped his ancestors and forefathers cross the ocean of transmigration (the passing of the soul after death into some other body; here it means that they were liberated from this cycle of birth, death and re-birth). Once done, he then took them all (Ram, Sita, Laxman and Nishad) across the river (Doha 2/101).

Sri Ram, Sita, Laxman and Nishad stood on the sand of the bank of the river on the other side [2/102/1].

[Note : The territorial boundary of Ayodhya ended here. The real exile starts from this point..

The Barvai Ramayan describes in verse nos. 24-25 in a few words the famous incident when the boatman refused to take Lord Ram across the river because he feared that the dust of the Lord's holy feet would turn his wooden boat into a lady just like the case of the stone turning into Ahilya when the Lord had touched it while on his way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra as described in the Baal Kand. The Lord allowed the boatman to wash his holy feet.

तुलसी जनि पग धरहु गंग मह साँच ।
निगानाँग करि नितहि नचाइहि नाच ।।24 ।।

24-[Alluding to the Kewat-boatman episode, and repeating his words—] Tulsidas says, 'Standing in the water of river Ganges, I say truthfully that you must not put your foot in my boat (because the wooden boat shall be converted into a lady, and seeing me with her), my wife would make me dance naked daily (i.e. she would tease me daily and make life hell for me)'.

[Note—When Lord Ram wished to cross the river Ganges, the boat man named Kevat would not allow the Lord to board his wooden boat out of fear that the dust of the Lord's holy feet might turn his wooden boat into some lady just like the case of a stone turning into lady Ahilya when the Lord touched it while on his way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra as described in the Baal Kand. He did not want to take this risk. He said that should it happen then not only will he lose his only means of livelihood but the lady that the boat would be converted into will become his second wife. His first wife would become jealous of her, thinking that the boatman had married her out of his own free will. She would not know the reality, and the result would be that his life would turn into hell. So he would not allow the Lord to board his humble boat unless the Lord allows him to wash his feet of all its dust.]

सजल कठौता कर गहि कहत निषाद ।
चढ़हु नाव पग धोइ करहु जनि बाद ।।25 ।।

25-Nishad (the boatman) holds a wooden bowl full of water in his hands, and pleads (with Sri Ram)—'Wash your feet in this and then board the boat, do not argue unnecessarily'.

{ After crossing river Ganges, Lord Ram, Sita, Laxman and Nishad moved on and arrived at the confluence of three holy rivers Ganges, Yamunna and Saraswati at a place called Prayag. It was here that sage Bharadwaj had his hermitage. }

Arrival of Lord Ram at Prayag: Ram Charit Manas

तेहि दिन भयउ बिटप तर बासू। लखन सखाँ सब कीन्ह सुपासू।।
 प्रात प्रातकृत करि रघुराई। तीरथराजु दीख प्रभु जाई।।2 [2/105/1-2]
 मुदित नहाइ कीन्हि सिव सेवा। पूजि जथाबिधि तीरथ देवा।। [2/106/6]

The third day out of Ayodhya, Lord Ram halted under a tree; the spot was made reasonably comfortable for his halt by Laxman and Nishad (2/105/1).

The next (4th) morning, Lord Ram did his daily routine and proceeded to and arrived at Prayag which is like a king of all holy places. [This place is situated in the city of Allahabad in modern India.] [2/105/2].

At Triveni (the confluence of the three holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati) he bathed and worshipped Lord Shiva and other deities residing there [2/106/6].

Arrival at sage Bharadhwaj's hermitage: Ram Charit Manas

तब प्रभु भरद्वाज पहिँ आए। करत दंडवत मुनि उर लाए।। [2/106/7].

Then the Lord arrived at sage Bharadhwaj's hermitage and prostrated himself before the sage, whereupon the latter lovingly embraced him and blessed him [2/106/7].

Departure from Bharadhwaj's Ashram: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- राम कीन्ह बिश्राम निसि प्रात प्रयाग नहाइ।
 चले सहित सिय लखन जन मुदित मुनिहि सिरु नाइ।। [Doha 2/108]
 राम सप्रेम कहेउ मुनि पाहीं। नाथ कहिअ हम केहि मग जाहीं।। [2/109/1]
 करि प्रनामु रिषि आयसु पाई। प्रमुदित हृदयँ चले रघुराई।। [2/109/6]

This was the fifth night halt at sage Bharadhwaj hermitage. The next morning (the sixth day) Lord Ram bathed at Prayag again and then proceeded ahead along with Sita, Laxman and Nishad (Doha 2/108).

Lord Ram requested the sage (Bharadhwaj) to tell him the route which he shall take to the forest [2/109/1]. Then he bowed his head to the sage and departed joyfully [2/109/6].

Crossing river Yamuna and sending Nishad back: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- उतरि नहाए जमुन जल जो सरीर सम स्याम ।। [Doha 2/109/Kha]
 दोहा- तब रघुबीर अनेक बिधि सखहि सिखावनु दीन्ह।
 राम रजायसु सीस धरि भवन गवनु तेई कीन्ह।। [Doha 2/111]
 पुनि सियँ राम लखन कर जोरी। जमुनहि कीन्ह प्रनामु बहोरी।।
 चले ससीय मुदित दोउ भाई। रबितनुजा कइ करत बड़ाई।। [Chaupai lines 2/112/1-2]

From Prayag, Lord Ram took the down-stream direction of river Yamuna and bathed in its waters which were as dark as his own complexion [Doha 2/10/Kha].

At that spot, he finally took leave of his friend and companion Nishad (who had accompanied him from Srinagar) after reassuring and comforting him in various ways. [Nishad had earnestly wanted to accompany the Lord to the forest because he pleaded that he was well-versed in the ways of the jungle and he would be perfect guide. But the Lord wished not to trouble him and put him to danger—because his mission was not just to idly pass away the fourteen years at some comfortable place but to root out the ferocious demons from the earth, and this entailed a lot of danger, and the Lord did not wish to put the humble Nishad to that risk. The Lord reassured him that he should not worry for him as he is capable to take care of himself.] [Doha 2/111].

Then, Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman bowed their heads with folded hands and repeatedly paid their respects to river Yamuna and proceeded ahead on the next leg of their journey, all the while extolling the virtues of the daughter of the Sun-God (river Yamuna). [2/112/1-2].

En-route to the forest: Ram Charit Manas

जे पुर गाँव बसहिं मग माहीं। तिन्हहि नाग सुर नगर सिहाहीं॥१॥
 जहाँ जहाँ राम चरन चलि जाहीं। तिन्ह समान अमरावति नाहीं॥३॥
 परसि राम पद पदुम परागा। मानति भूमि भूरि निज भागा॥४॥
 दोहा- छाँह करहिं घन बिबुधगन बरषहिं सुमन सिहाहिं।
 देखत गिरि बन बिहग मृग रामु चले मग जाहिं॥ [Chaupai lines 2/113/1,3,8, Doha 113.]

The cities, villages and hamlets that fell in the way of the Lord's path were praised by the cities where the Gods reside (because Lord Ram had walked up to these humble earth cities and never set foot in the heavenly cities of the Gods) (2/113/1). Even Amrawati (the celestial city of Indra, the king of Gods) was no comparison to these small and big hamlets which were fortunate enough to touch the feet of Lord Sri Ram (2/113/3). The soil (earth) regarded herself most lucky on being able to touch Lord Ram's feet (2/113/8). The clouds screened the Lord from the sun, and the Gods rained (showered) flowers on him (so that the hard earth below his feet would be cushioned and made soft) as Lord Ram wended his way in the forest looking at the hills, the woods, the birds and the beasts (Doha 2/113).

[Note : After his departure from Prayag, Tulsidas has not mentioned the sequence or number of each passing day. So, the counting of the number of days is hereby discontinued.]

Geetawali: Raag Bilaawal: Verse no. 2/13—

कहौ सो बिपिन हैं धौं केतिक दूरि।
 जहाँ गवन कियो, कुँवर कोसलपति, बूझति सिय पिय पतिहि बिसूरि ॥१॥

प्राननाथ परदेस पयादेहि चले सुख सकल तजे तृन तूरि ।
 करौं बयारि, बिलंबिय बिटपतर, झारौंहीं चरन-सरोरुह-धूरि ।।2
 तुलसिदास प्रभु प्रियावचन सुनि नीरजनयन नीर आए पूरि ।
 कानन कहाँ अबहिं सुनु सुंदरि, रघुपति फिरि चितए हित भूरि ।।3

Verse no. 2/13—Sita became tired, so she asked Lord Ram, ‘Lord, how far is the forest for which you have started from Ayodhya? [I am feeling tired; how far do we have to travel on foot?] (1) Oh my Lord! You had snapped your relationship with all materialistic comforts of home and are proceeding to an unknown place on foot. You must be tired. Take a little rest under the shadow of this tree. Come, I shall fan you, massage your legs and scrub the dust from it (wash it).’

[The pain of this stanza is very apparent. Sita is so tired that she wants to sit down, and wanders how long would she be forced to travel—this is clear from her question ‘how far is your destination’. Then she saw the pain on Lord Ram’s face, and quickly corrected herself, showing courage and boldness. She instead now tells the Lord to sit down so that she can massage his tired legs and wash off the dust from it.] (2).

Tulsidas says that hearing such affectionate words of Sita, tears welled-up in Lord Ram’s eyes, and pitifully he said, ‘There! Where is the forest now? [We have just started on our journey and have passed through inhabited areas of our kingdom through villages, hamlets etc. The real forest is yet to come. And even now you are tired, say so how will you bear the torture of the journey when we enter the real forest which is harsh to the extreme? Didn’t I tell you to stay back, but you insisted on coming with me. So have courage and be bold. Soon you will be accustomed to walking long distances on foot.]’ (3). [2/13]”.

Geetawali: Raag Bilaawal: Verse no. 2/33—

बोले राज देन को, रजायसु भो कानन को,
 आनन प्रसन्न, मन मोद, बड़ो काज भो ।
 मातु-पिता-बन्धु-हित आपनो परम हित,
 मोको बीसहूकै ईस अनुकूल आजु भो ।।1
 असत अजीरनको समुझि तिलक, तज्यौं,
 बिपिन-गवनु भले भूखेको सुनाजु भो ।
 धरम-धुरीन धीर वीर रघुबीरजू को
 कोटि राज सरिस भरतजूको राजु भो ।।2
 ऐसी बातें कहत सुनत मग-लोगन की
 चले जात बंधु दोउ मुनिको सो साज भो ।
 ध्याइबेको गाइबेको, सेइबे सुमिरिबेको,
 तुलसी को सब भाँति सुखद समाज भो ।।3

Verse no. 2/33—The residents of the villages and small hamlets lying on the way talked with each other when they saw Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman walking barefoot on their way to the forest—‘The king (Dasrath) had planned to give him (Lord Ram) the crown,

but suddenly ordered him to go to the forest. But at this, Lord Ram felt very happy and his face became radiant and glowing with joy. He started thinking to himself—‘Well, a great thing has happened, for this will result in keeping my parents (father Dasrath and step-mother Kaikeyi) as well as my brother (Bharat) happy and contented, it will satisfy their wishes, and at the same time it will also make me happy (because now I will get a chance to go and do the job for which I have come to this world in a human form, and it is to kill the demons and free the earth of its burden). It looks to me that the creator has become benign on me today (1).’

Then, regarding kingdom as a food which causes indigestion, he abandoned it willingly and forthwith while accepting departure for the forest as being equivalent to an appetizing food laid out for the hungry. [That is, he abandoned the kingdom of Ayodhya most willingly, and as willingly came to the forest, without regrets for both the events.] This way, for the extremely righteous and noble Lord Ram, the crowning of Bharat was equivalent to his own crowning a million of times over (2).’

Hearing such talk from the people en-route, Lord Ram, attired like a hermit, wended his way through the forest. As for Tulsidas, the remembrance, the thought, the speaking-about and the singing of this glory of Lord Ram's divine life on earth is the provider of all imaginable happiness (3). [2/33].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/11—

पुरतें निकसी रघुबीरबधू धरि धीर दए मगमें डग द्वे ।
झलकी भरि भाल कनी जलकी, पुट सूखि गए मधुराधर वै ।।
फिरि बूझति हैं, चलनो अब केतिक, पर्नकुटी करिहौ कित है ?
तियकी लखि आतुरता पियकी अँखियाँ अति चारु चली जल चै ।।11।।

Verse no. 2/11—When Sita left the outskirts (outer periphery) of the city of Ayodhya, she braced herself (for the onward journey on foot) and took a few steps on the (rough) road. Immediately, due to her delicate constitution (and because she was un-accustomed to hardships), sweat drops emerged on her fore-head and both the lips became parched (dried, due to thirst). She turned towards Lord Ram and asked, ‘Oh dear! How far have we still to go, and where will you erect a hut?’

Seeing his dear wife's distress and anxiety, her eagerness to soon find a place to rest, and her un-easiness at having to walk barefoot on the rough road, the lover's (Lord Ram's) eyes welled-up with tears, which rolled down his cheeks.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/12—

जलको गए लखनु, हैं लरिका
परिखौ, पिय! छाहँ घरीक है ठाढ़े ।
पोंछि पसेउ बयारि करौ,
अरु पाय पखारिहौ भूभुरि-डाढ़े ।।
तुलसी रघुबीर प्रियाश्रम जानि कै
बैठि बिलंब लौं कंटक काढ़े ।
जानकी नाहको नेहु लख्यो,
पुलको तनु, बारि बिलोचन बाढ़े ।।12।।

Verse no. 2/12—Sita says affectionately to Lord Ram, ‘Dear, Laxman is a boy (still a child). He has gone to fetch water, so wait for him for some time under some shade somewhere. I shall wipe your sweat, fan you and wash your feet, which have been burnt (scorched) by the hot sand.’

Realising that Sita was tired, Lord Ram sat down and plucked the thorns from her feet for some time. When Sita saw her beloved’s affection for her, she was overwhelmed with emotions, was thrilled, and tears welled-up in her eyes too.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/13—

ठाढ़े हैं नवद्रुमडार गहें,
धनु काँधें धरें, कर सायकु लै ।
बिकटी भूकुटी, बड़री अँखियाँ,
अनमोल कपोलन की छबि है ॥
तुलसी अस मूरति आनु हिउँ,
जड ! डारु धौं प्रान निछावरि कै ।
श्रमसीकर साँवरि देह लसै,
मनो रासि महा तम तारकमै ॥13॥

Verse no. 2/13—Lord Ram is standing, leaning against or holding some new branch of the tree. He has a bow slung across his shoulder and an arrow in his hand. His eye-brows are curved (i.e. raised), eyes are large and the cheeks are splendidly glowing. The dark complexioned body, with glistening sweat-drops, looks glorious like a great dark constellation dotted with sparkling stars.

Tulsidas addresses himself and says, ‘Oh you dumb fellow! Give abode to such an image of the Lord in your heart even at the cost of sacrificing your life (i.e. you are as good as dead if you aren't enchanted with, captivated with and thrilled at such an adorable, such a beautiful and such a fascinating image of the Lord).’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/14—

जलजनयन, जलजानन जटा है सिर,
जौबन-उमंग अंग उदित उदार हैं ।
साँवरे-गोरेके बीच भामिनी सुदामिनी-सी,
मुनिपट धारैं, उर फूलनिके हार हैं ॥
करनि सरासन सिलीमुख, निषंग कटि,
अति ही अनूप काहू भूपके कुमार हैं ।
तुलसी बिलोकि कै तिलोकके तिलक तीनि
रहे नरनारि ज्यों चितेरे चित्रसार हैं ॥14॥

Verse no. 2/14—[The villagers residing in the wayside villages talk with each other in hushed tones on seeing Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita]:- ‘Their eyes and faces are like lotus. Their hairs are matted on their heads, and their bodies are radiant with youthfulness. A beautiful woman, whose countenance resembles the dazzle and radiance of lightening,

looks beautiful between the dark complexioned one (Lord Ram) and the fair one (Laxman). These three are attired like hermits, and have a garland of flowers over their chests. With bow and arrow in their hands and quiver tied around their waists, they appear to be princes of some king, princes so handsome and beautiful and peerless that the likes of them have never been seen before.

Tulsidas says that on seeing the three 'Tilaks' of the three Lokas, the men and women of the wayside villages were stunned and rendered immobile as if they were portraits or part of a painting.

[The word 'Tilak' literally refers to an auspicious and ceremonial mark put on the forehead. It also means someone who is eminent, most prominent, foremost, most honourable and exalted. The three Lokas refer to the three worlds such as the subterranean, terrestrial, celestial worlds. Hence, the meaning of this stanza is that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman are so wonderful to look at that they stand out in the whole creation as the most exalted ones.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/15—

आगेँ सोहै साँवरो कुँवरु गोरो पाछेँ-पाछेँ,
आछे मुनिबेष धरें, लाजत अनंग हैं।
बान बिसिषासन, बसन बनही के कटि
कसे हैं बनाइ, नीके राजत निषंग हैं॥
साथ निसिनाथमुखी पाथनाथनंदिनी-सी,
तुलसी बिलोकें चितु लाइ लेत संग हैं।
आनँद उमंग मन, जौबन-उमंग तन,
रूपकी उमंग उमगत अंग-अंग हैं॥15॥

Verse no. 2/15—The dark-complexioned prince walks in the front, and the fair-skinned one comes in the rear—both of them are dressed like a hermit and appear adorable and glorious; even Kamdeo himself feels inferior as compared to their beauty. They have a bow and arrow, and are adorned in clothes suitable for the forest. Beautiful quivers are tied around their waists. They are accompanied by a moon-faced woman who is like Goddess Laxmi, the daughter of the ocean, herself personified.

Tulsidas says that on seeing them, one gets automatically attracted towards them, and his heart and mind accompanies them wherever they go, such is their magnetic personality. Their hearts are full of joy, their bodies are radiant with youthful energy, and beauty seems to sprout (effuse) from each of their body-parts.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/16—

सुन्दर बदन, सरसीरुह सुहाए नैन,
मंजुल प्रसून माथें मुकुट जटनि के।
अंसनि सरासन, लसत सुचि सर कर,
तून कटि मुनिपट लूटक पटनि के॥
नारि सुकुमारि संग, जाके अंग उबटि कै,
बिधि बिरचै बरुथ बिद्युतछटनि के।

गोरेको बरबु देखें सोनो न सलोनी लागै,
साँवरे बिलोकें गर्ब घटत घटनि के ।।16।।

Verse no. 2/16—They have beauteous faces, their eyes are like lotus, and their heads have crowns of matted hairs with beautiful flowers tucked in them. The bow is strung across their shoulders, hands hold beautiful arrows, and quivers and hermit-like clothes, which are more glamorous than ordinary clothes, are wrapped around their waists. They are accompanied by a gentle and tender lady. The creator Brahma had created the group of sparklers (i.e. stars) by the residue that was left by rubbing 'Ubatan' (a concoction of powdered gram mixed with honey and milk that is rubbed on the body to clean the skin) on her (Sita's) divine body. On seeing the fair complexion of Laxman, gold loses its sheen, while seeing the dark-complexioned prince (Ram), even the dark rain-bearing clouds feel inferior or ashamed.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/17—

बलकल-बसन, धनु-बान पानि, तून कटि,
रूपके निधान घन-दामिनी-बरन हैं ।
तुलसी सुतीय संग, सहज सुहाए अंग,
नवल कँवलहू तें कोमल चरन हैं ।।
औरै सो बसंतु, और रति, औरै रतिपति,
मूरति बिलोकें तन-मनके हरन हैं ।
तापस बैसै बनाइ पथिक पथें सुहाइ,
चले लोकलोचननि सुफल करन हैं ।।17।।

Verse no. 17—Wearing clothes made of leaves (and other tree-parts such as bark), having bow and arrow in their hands and quiver tied around their waist, the two princes appear to be a treasure-house of exceptional bewitching beauty, and have complexions resembling dark cloud and lightening (i.e. dark and fair) respectively. [The dark prince is Lord Ram, and the fair prince is Laxman.]

Accompanying them is a beautiful lady whose body is naturally beautiful and glamorous, and her feet are more tender/soft than a new lotus flower. It appears that Laxman is a second (i.e. a parallel, a duplicate) Basant (the spring season), Sita is a Rati (wife of Kamdeo, the patron God of love, cupid and passion), and Lord Ram is Kamdeo himself. Their enchanting image (i.e. vision, view, sight) is so fabulous and attractive that it appears to steal one's mind and body (i.e. one becomes so enthralled and enamoured at the sight that one tends to forget about one's surroundings and awareness of his own body). It appears that these three (the spring season, Rati and Kamdeo) have taken the form of a hermit couple, and have taken to the road to give the wayside residents of the villages and hamlets the fruits of their eyes (i.e. to enable them to enjoy a most magnificent and beautiful sight which they will cherish for a life-time).

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/18—

बनिता बनी स्यामल गौरके बीच,
बिलोकहु, री सखि! मोहि-सी है ।

मगजोगु न कोमल, क्यों चलिहै,
 सकुचाति महि पदपंकज छवै ।।
 तुलसी सुनि ग्रामबधू बिथकी,
 पुलकी तन, औ चले लोचन चवै ।
 सब भाँति मनोहर मोहनरूप
 अनूप हैं भूपके बालक द्वै ।।18।।

Verse no. 2/18—[One village woman says to another]:- ‘Oh friend! Between the dark and the fair complexioned princes, there is a lady. Watch her a little, the way I behold her. She is very delicate and tender, and most unsuitable to walk on the road. I wonder how she will walk (all the way to her destination).

Well, (it appears that) the earth feels shy at the touch of her soft feet! [This is because the ground is hard compared to the soles of Sita’s feet, and the earth is ashamed at its harshness that causes so much discomfort and pain to Sita]!’

Tulsidas says that hearing her, all other women-folk of the village became pensive, full of regret, distraught and sombre; their bodies became thrilled and tears rolled down their eyes. [All of them started saying—] ‘These two princes are attractive by all counts, and peerlessly beautiful.’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/19—

साँवरे-गोरे सलोने सुभायँ, मनोहरताँ जिति मैनु लियो है ।
 बान-कमान, निषंग कसैं, सिर सोहैं जटा, मुनिबेषु कियो है ।।
 संग लिएँ बिधुबैनी बधू, रतिको जेहि रंचक रूपु दियो है ।
 पायन तौ पनहीं न, पयादेहि क्यों चलिहैं, सकुचात हियो है ।।19।।

Verse no. 2/19—‘These two dark and fair complexioned princes are naturally handsome, and (it appears that) they have won Kamdeo (the patron God of beauty and glamour) in as far as beauty is concerned. They have a bow and arrow (in their hands) and a quiver (tied around their waists), matted hairs adorn their heads, and they are attired like a hermit. They have a lady with them, whose body is (glamorous) like a moon and (it appears that) she has given a part (or fraction) of her beauty to Rati (consort of Kamdeo). On seeing them one’s heart feels hesitant (reluctant, sorry, pitiful), wondering that since they do not have even a proper pair of foot-wear to wear, how will they walk (on the hard ground)?’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/20—

रानी में जानी अयानी महा, पबि-पाहनहू तें कठोर हियो है ।
 राजहुँ काजु अकाजु न जान्यो, कह्यो तियको जेहि कान कियो है ।।
 ऐसी मनोहर मूरति ए, बिछुरें कैसे प्रीतम लोगु जियो है ।
 आँखिनमें सखि! सखिबे जोगु, इन्हें किमि कै बनबासु दियो है ।।20।।

Verse no. 2/20—‘I have realised (or have come to the conclusion) that the queen (who sent them to exile) is a great fool; her heart is harder than stone or Vajra (the weapon of

Indra which is considered the hardest material in existence). The king also forgot what was right or wrong, for he lent his ears to a woman. Oh! Their image is so enchanting and captivating for the mind, the mind is so much in thrall of their sight that one wonders how their kin and dear ones survive in their absence? Oh friends! They are worthy of being kept constantly within sight. We wonder why then have they been sent to exile?’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/21—

सीस जटा, उर-बाहु बिसाल, बिलोचन लाल, तिरीछी-सी भौहैं ।
तून सरासन-बान धरें तुलसी बन-मारगमें सुठि सोहैं ।।
सादर बारहिं बार सुभायँ चितै तुम्ह त्यों हमरो मनु मोहैं ।
पूँछत ग्रामबधू सिय सों, कहौ, साँवरे-से सखि! रावरे को हैं ।।21।।

Verse no. 2/21—Tulsidas says that Sita is asked by the village women-folk—‘He, who has matted hairs on his head, whose chest and arms are broad, eyes are red-coloured (like the colour of the rising sun at dawn) and eyebrows are curved, who appears so innocent and gentle on the forest path though he holds a bow, an arrow and a quiver, and who glances repeatedly and affectionately towards you, the whole sight being so enchanting that it attracts our minds and rivets our attention on him—say, oh dear friend, how is that dark-complexioned youth related to you? [The obvious reference is to Lord Ram.]’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/22—

सुनि सुंदर बैन सुधारस-साने सयानी हैं जानकी जानी भली ।
तिरछे करि नैन, दै सैन तिन्हें समुझाइ कछू , मुसुकाइ चली ।।
तुलसी तेहि औसर सोहैं सबै अवलोकति लोचनलाहु अली ।
अनुराग-तड़ागमें भानु उदै बिगसी मनो मंजुल कंजकली ।।22।।

Verse no. 2/22—On hearing the sweet-as-nectar words of village women, Sita understood that they were very clever. Therefore, (instead of speaking and replying directly to them) she blushed and gestured to them with a shy look on her face, glancing towards Sri Ram with slanting eyes (to explain the relationship), then smiled and moved on. [By her gestures Sita told the women that the youth they were referring to was her dear husband.] Tulsidas says that at that moment, the sight of those women watching Lord Ram to the contentment of their eyes (i.e. to their heart’s content) appears as magnificent as the blossoming of the lotus buds into full flowers in the pond of love at the sight of the rising sun.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/23—

धरि धीर कहैं, चलु, देखिअ जाइ, जहाँ सजनी! रजनी रहिहैं ।
कहिहै जगु पोच, न सोचु कछू, फलु लोचन आपन तौ लहिहैं ।।

सुख पाइहैं कान सुने बतियाँ कल, आपुसमें कछु पै कहिहैं ।
तुलसी अति प्रेम लगी पलकैं, पुलकीं लखि रामु हिए महि हैं ।।23।।

Verse no. 2/23—Those women folk gathered courage and fortitude, and said to each other wistfully, ‘Oh gentle friend! Come, let’s go and see the place where they would spend the night. Even if the world accuses us of ulterior motives (i.e. cast aspersions on our character), it doesn’t really matter. Our eyes will get their benefit, and the ears will feel happy hearing their sweet talk, for they would surely talk with each other (even if they don’t talk with us).’

Tulsidas says that their eyes shut close due to intense (devotionally pure) love, and they were thrilled at ‘seeing’ the image of Lord Ram in their hearts. [By closing the eyes, they had literally shut the image of Lord Ram in their hearts.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/24—

पद कोमल, स्यामल-गौर कलेवर राजत कोटि मनोज लजाएँ ।
कर बान-सरासन, सीस जटा, सरसीरुह-लोचन सोन सुहाएँ ।।
जिन्ह देखे सखी! सतिभायहु तैं तुलसी तिन्ह तौ मन फेरि न पाए ।
एहिं मारग आजु किसोर बधू बिधुबैनी समेत सुभायँ सिधाए ।।24।।

Verse no. 2/24—[Those who were fortunate to see the magnificent and enchanting sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman pass through the village road told other women who have not had the chance to see the beautiful once-in-a-lifetime sight—] ‘Oh friend! Today, two youths had gone this way, and they were accompanied by a lady who was as beautiful as the moon. Their feet were very soft, tender and delicate, and their dark and fair complexions looked glamorous as if putting to shame crores (millions) of Kamdeos. They had bow and arrow in their hands; their heads had matted hairs, and their magnificent and glorious eyes were like red-coloured lotus. Those who even glanced at them were so enamoured and enthralled at the sight that they could not divert their attention from them (i.e. they were virtually transfixed at their magnificent sight and their eyes were literally riveted to them).’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 2/25—

मुखपंकज, कंजबिलोचन मंजु, मनोज-सरासन-सी बनीं भौहैं ।
कमनीय कलेवर कोमल स्यामल-गौर किसोर, जटा सिर सोहैं ।।
तुलसी कटि तून, धरें धनु बान, अचानक दिष्टि परी तिरछैहैं ।
केहि भाँति कहौं सजनी! तोहि सौं मृदु मूरति द्वै निवसी मन मोहैं ।।25।।

Verse no. 2/25—‘Their faces and eyes were beautiful like the lotus, and the eyebrows were curved like the bow of Kamdeo. They had most handsome and tender bodies of dark and fair complexion respectively. They were youthful, their heads were adorned with matted hairs, a quiver was tied around their waists, and they had a bow and arrow in their

hands. Oh friend! From the moment they suddenly glanced at me, how can I tell you, those two beautiful images (of Ram and Laxman) have found their abode in my heart, and they have completely taken over my mind and sub-conscious so much so that I am held in trance and am unable to shake their enchanting and captivating image off my memory.'

{Now we shall quote the following selected verses from Geetawali which shows the sense of great regret of those women-folk of the villages who could not see Ram, Sita and Laxman as they passed by, and now yearn for the divine sight which they doubt they will ever be fortunate to see again in their lives.}

Geetawali: Raag Gauri: Verse no. 2/35—

नीके कै मैं न बिलोकन पाए ।
 सखि! यहि मग जुग पथिक मनोहर, बधु बिधु-बदनि समेत सिधाए ॥ 1 ॥
 नयन सरोज, किसोर बयस बर, सीस जटा रचि मुकुट बनाए ।
 कटि मुनिबसन-तून, धनु-सर कर, स्यामल-गौर, सुभाय सोहाए ॥ 2 ॥
 सुंदर बदन बिसाल बाहु-उर, तनु-छबि कोटि मनोज लजाए ।
 चितवत मोहि लगी चौंधी-सी, जानौं न, कौन, कहाँ तें धौं आए ॥ 3 ॥
 मनु गयो संग, सोचबस लोचन मोचत बारि, कितौ समुझाए ।
 तुलसिदास लालसा दरसकी सोइ पुरवै, जेहि आनि देखाए ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 2/35—'Oh Friend! I could not have a good look at the two attractive pedestrians along with the moon-faced lady who have gone by this path (1).

Their eyes were like lotus, they were pleasantly teenaged, had a crown of matted hairs on their heads, had hermit-like clothes and quiver tied to their waists, and had a bow and an arrow in their hands. They had dark and fair complexions, and were naturally handsome, pretty, charming and glamorous (2).

Their faces were attractive, they had broad chests and long arms as they had put crores (millions) of Kamdeo-cupids to shame by the virtue of the spectacular radiance and glamour of their bodies. I was dazzled (by the glare of their splendour and the charm of their beauty) on seeing them. I could not find out who they were and from where they had come (3).

My heart has gone with them! The eyes are raining tears due to their remembrance. I have tried to reason with my mind and intellect (to be practical, and forget about them) but still I am eagerly desirous of seeing them at least once again. Now, this desire (yearning) can only be fulfilled by Him (the Lord God) who had brought them (Sri Ram, Laxman, Sita) here once, so that I could see them again.' (4).

Geetawali: Raag Gauri: Verse no. 2/36—

पुनि न फिरे दोउ बीर बटाऊ ।
 स्यामल गौर, सहज सुंदर, सखि! बारक बहुरि बिलोकिबे काऊ ॥ 1 ॥
 कर—कमलनि सर, सुभग सरासन, कटि मुनिबसन—निषंग सोहाए ।
 भुज प्रलंब, सब अंग मनोहर, धन्य सो जनक—जननि जेहि जाए ॥ 2 ॥
 सरद—बिमल बिधु बदन, जटा सिर, मंजुल अरुन—सरोरुह—लोचन ।
 तुलसिदास मनमय मारगमें राजत कोटि—मदन—मदमोचन ॥ 3 ॥

Verse no. 2/36—‘Oh Friend! Those brave mendicant travellers did not come back on this path again. Those two dark and fair princes were naturally pretty and charming. Can we ever see them once again?’ (1).

[*This is an excellent warning by Tulsidas to us—we get only one chance in the long chain of birth and death to find liberation from the shackles of this mundane, illusionary world. If we miss it, if we forego this golden opportunity to see or witness our Lord Sri Ram in this life, we will repent for all our lives and times to come. Sri Ram—symbolizing bliss, emancipation and salvation—will not come back to us. So beware!]

Their lotus-like hands held a bow and arrow, while hermit-like clothes and a quiver adorned their waists. Their arms were long and their entire body was most attractive. Those parents who gave them birth are worthy of praise and honour (2).

Tulsidas says that (for him) the Lord—whose face is like a winter's full moon, has matted hairs on the head, has eyes as beautiful as red lotus, and who can crush the pride and haughtiness of millions of Kamdeo-cupids—is ever present in the path of our (i.e. devotees like Tulsidas') hearts.

[The idea is that if one enshrines the Lord in one's heart, one's mind and one's sub-conscious, if one remembers the divine story and the divine glories of the Lord at all moments of his life, then it is sure that he will not have to regret like these village women who had missed the chance to have a glimpse of the Lord as he walked down the path. Well, we might also not be able to see the Lord ourselves in the physical sense of the term, but at the ethereal level of the Spirit the soul should be completely imbued in the colour of love for the Lord. If this happens, the Lord will always be with us at all moments of our lives as we walk down the path of life from its beginning when the soul enters the body till the time it leaves it to find its emancipation and deliverance.] (3).

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 2/37—

आली ! काहू तौ बूझौ न, पथिक कहाँ धौं सिधैहैं ।
 कहाँतें आए हैं, को हैं, कहा नाम स्याम—गोरे,
 काज कै कुसल फिरि एहि मग ऐहैं ? ॥ 1 ॥
 उठति बयस, मसि भीजति, सलोने सुदि,
 सोभा—देखवैया बिनु बित्त ही बिकैहैं ।
 हिये हेरि हरि लेत लोनी ललना समेत,

लोयननि लाहु देत जहाँ जहाँ जैहैं ॥ 2 ॥
 राम—लषन—सिय—पंथकी कथा पृथुल,
 प्रेम बिथकीं कहति सुमुखि सबै हैं।
 तुलसी तिन्ह सरिस तेऊ भूरिभाग जेऊ,
 सुनि कै सुचित तेहि समै समैहैं ॥ 3 ॥

Verse no. 2/37—‘Oh Friend! Ask someone where will these pedestrians go, from whence have they come, who are they, what is the name of these dark and fair complexioned princes, and will they return back after completion of their mission (in the forest) by this path or not? (1).

They are growing in youthfulness, their bodies seem to be drenched in the colour of youth, they appear very pleasant and simple to look at, and those who behold their charm, beauty, glamour and magnificence are selling themselves free of cost (i.e. are held in thrall by them). The well-built and pretty daughter accompanying them steals (i.e. captivates, enchants and enthralls) the mind and intellect of the people by her mere glance. Wherever they go, they would bestow the benefit (fruit, reward) of possessing eyes to the people. [The people would feel lucky and glad that they saw them with their eyes, a sight which they would cherish in their lives, and the best sight they had ever seen or hope to see with their eyes in this life again.] (2).’

In this way, all the pretty-faced women-folk narrate the immensely marvelous stories of the pedestrian trio, Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita, as they wend their way through the path of the countryside leading to the forest. Tulsidas asserts that those who involve their mind and intellect in these divine stories (of Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita on the path to the forest) are as lucky and privileged as those women-folk of the wayside villages and hamlets who had had the privilege of seeing them first hand (3).”

{The next verse describes how the people are anxious to hear about any news of Lord Ram and his companions Sita and Laxman. The news however had spread across the land like wild-fire, with people talking about them everywhere. Some wondered, some were simply dumbstruck, and some prophesised.}

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 2/41—

जबतें सिधारे यहि मारग लषन—राम,
 जानकी सहित, तबतें न सुधि लही है।
 अवध गए धौं फिरि, कैधौं चढे बिंध्यगिरि,
 कैधौं कहूँ रहे, सो कछू न काहू कही है ॥ 1 ॥
 एक कहै, चित्रकूट निकट नदीके तीर,
 परनकुटीर करि बसे, बात सही है।
 सुनियत, भरत मनाइबेको आवत हैं,
 होइगी पै सोई, जो बिधाता चित्त चही है ॥ 2 ॥

सत्यसंध, धरम—धुरीन रघुनाथजूको,
 आपनी निबाहिबे, नृपकी निरबही है।
 दस—चारि बरिस बिहार बन पदचार,
 करिबे पुनीत सैल, सर—सरि, मही है॥ 3॥
 मुनि—सुर—सुजन—समाजके सुधारि काज,
 बिगारि बिगारि जहाँ जहाँ जाकी रही है।
 पुर पाँव धारिहैं, उधारिहैं तुलसीहू से जन,
 जिन जानि कै गरीबी गाढ़ी गही है॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/41—Ever since Sri Ram and Laxman, accompanied by Sita, had gone ahead through this path, there is no information about them. Whether they returned to Ayodhya, climbed the Vindhyaachal mountains or went somewhere else—no one has said anything about it (i.e. no one is certain where they have gone) (1).

Some say that they have erected a thatched hut on the banks of river Mandakini near Chitrakoot and have taken up dwelling there—this is probably very true. It is heard that Bharat is coming to try and seek rapprochement and reconciliation, but the end result depends on what the creator has in his mind (2).

The king (Dasrath) proved himself true to his words (by keeping his vows and dying for it); now it is the turn of Sri Raghunath (Lord Ram) to keep his words for he is an expert in upholding the sanctioned code of conduct (Dharma) and is an ocean of truthfulness. Hence, he would wander in the forest for fourteen years on foot, and in the process would make the mountains, the lakes, the rivers and the earth purified and sanctified by the steps of holy foot and the auro of his divine presence (3).

Wherever there are sages, hermits, seers, Gods, saints and mendicants who are finding themselves in difficulties due to any cause will now be redeemed by him (Sri Ram), and having done so he would go back to his capital city (Ayodhya). Besides them, he would also redeem and provide liberation and deliverance (from the fetters of this mundane world, the cycle of birth and death, and their accompanying miseries and tribulations) to servants who, like Tulsidas, have diligently held on to the virtues of simplicity and humility. [Sri Ram has a special tender feeling towards the humble, simple, meek, weak, lowly and downtrodden class of people. So, by possessing these qualities, Tulsidas is assured of getting Lord Ram's special attention, grace, compassion, mercy and benevolence.] (4).”

The Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 22-23, and 26 narrate how the people who lived in the villages and hamlets lying on the way react when they saw Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita winding their way on the road to the forest—

कोउ कह नर नारायन हरि हर कोउ।
 कोउ कह बिहरत बन मधु मनसिज दोउ॥22॥

22-[Seeing Sri Ram and Laxman on the forest path—] Some say that they are the sages Nar and Narayan themselves. Others say that they are Lords Vishnu and Shiva respectively. And still others say that Kamdeo-cupid (personified as Lord Ram) and Basant (the spring season personified as Laxman) are wandering in the forest.

तुलसी भइ मति बिथकित करि अनुमान ।
राम लखन के रूप न देखेउ आन ।।23 ।।

23-Tulsidas says that the intellect of the wayside residents (of the forest path i.e. peasants, villagers, tribal people, and other travellers who happened to meet them) became tired of guessing about who they actually were. They could not find any other God etc. who can be compared to the (most enchanting and incomparably beautiful) image of Sri Ram and Laxman (as they wend their path to the forest).

कमल कंटकित सजनी कोमल पाइ ।
निसि मलीन यह प्रफुलित नित दरसाइ ।।26 ।।

26-[The village women folk watch Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita going down the forest path and say—] 'Oh Gentle Friend! The lotus has thorns whereas their feet are softer than its petals. Not only this, the flower shrivels in the night while they are perennially blooming (fresh, tender and soft).' [Here, the feet of Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman are compared to a lotus flower.]

{Now, let us move on with the story. Lord Ram arrived in the hermitage of sage Valmiki and then moved on to reach a place called Chitrakoot where he made a temporary abode to live for some time. It was here that Bharat came to try and please the Lord and take him back to Ayodhya.}

Arrival of Lord Ram at Valmiki's Ashram: Ram Charit Manas

देखत बन सर सैल सुहाए । बालमीकि आश्रम प्रभु आए । (2/124/5)
मुनि कहूँ राम दंडवत कीन्हा । आसिरबादु बिप्रबर दीन्हा ।। (2/125/1)

Taking in and enjoying the various sights of beautiful woods, rivers, mountains etc. that fell on the way, the Lord next arrived at sage Valmiki's Ashram. He prostrated before the sage who blessed the Lord (2/124/5, 2/125/1).

The Barvai Ramayan describes the Lord's visit to Valmiki's hermitage in verse no. 27. It clearly asserts that Lord Ram is Lord Vishnu personified, while Laxman is a manifestation of Sheshnath—

द्वै भुज करि हरि रघुबर सुंदर बेष ।
एक जीभ कर लछिमन दूसर सेष ।। 27 ।।

27-The sage Valmiki said, 'The beautifully attired Raghubar (Sri Ram) is a two-armed manifestation of Lord Vishnu, while Laxman is another legendary Shesh-nath with a single tongue. [Shesh-nath has a thousand hoods and as many tongues or fangs. Laxman is a manifestation of this legendary serpent, but in a human form he has only one tongue instead of the thousand tongues of Shesh-nath. Lord Vishnu rests on the coiled back of this serpent as it floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshir-sagar. It is also believed that Shesh-nath supports the earth from below on its hood.]

Departure of Lord Ram from Valmiki's Ashram : Ram Charit Manas

अस जियँ जानि कहिअ सोइ ठाऊँ । सिय सौमित्रि सहित जहँ जाऊँ ।। 5
तहँ रचि रुचिर परन तृन साला । बासु करौं कछु काल कृपाला ।। 6 [2/126/5-6]
कह मुनि सुनहु भानुकुलनायक । आश्रम कहउँ समय सुखदायक ।। 2
चित्रकूट गिरि करहु निवासू । तहँ तुम्हार सब भाँति सुपासू ।। 3 [2/132/2-3]

Lord Ram asked sage Valmiki to guide him to the place where he could go along with Sita and Laxman (2/126/5) and reside for some time after constructing a dwelling hut of grass and leaves (2/126/6). The sage replied—'Listen oh Lord of the Solar race! I shall tell you a delightful and comfortable place under the present circumstances (2/132/2). There is a hill called Chirtakoot; you will find it very convenient for your stay (2/132/3). So you must go and live there.'

Lord Ram's sojourn at Chitrakoot: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- चित्रकूट महिमा अमित कही महामुनि गाइ ।
आइ नहाए सरित बर सिय समेत दोउ भाइ ।। (2/132)
रघुबर कहेउ लखन भल घाटू । करहु कतहुँ अब ठाहर ठाटू ।। 1
अस कहि लखन ठाउँ देखरावा । थलु बिलोकि रघुबर सुखु पावा ।। 5
रमेउ राम मनु देवन्ह जाना । चले सहित सुर थपति प्रधाना ।। 6
कोल किरात वेष सब आए । रचे परन तृन सदन सुहाए ।। 7 [2/133/1, 5-7]

After the great sage Valmiki described the infinite glory of Chitrakoot, the two brothers along with Sita came there and bathed in the sacred river Payaswini (Gupt Godavari) (2/132). Thereafter, Lord Ram asked Laxman to survey the area and find a spot where they can erect a dwelling (hut). At his instructions (request), Laxman surveyed the area and found a spot (where a small stream went like a bow and merged with the main river), and they decided to select that space for residence (1,5). When the Gods came to know that Lord Ram had selected a pleasant site, they took their main architect (Vishwakarma) and proceeded to Chitrakoot (6) in the form of forest tribes (Kol, Bhil), and erected a

beautiful hut of grass and leaves for the Lord to live as comfortably as was possible under the circumstances (2/133/1, 5-7).

{The beauty of Chitrakoot has been elaborately described by Tulsidas in Geetawali from verse nos. 2/43 to 2/50, and briefly in Barvai Ramayan in verse nos. 43-44. Here for the purpose of our narration, we will quote the Barvai Ramayan's two verses as well as some of the selected verses from Geetawali to enjoy the beauty of the place where our Lord spent some happy days of his tumultuous fourteen years of exile in the forest.}

Barvai Ramayan—

चित्रकूट पय तीर सो सुरतरु बास ।
लखन राम सिय सुमिरहु तुलसीदास ।। 43 ।।

43-To stay under any tree along the banks of the river Payaswani (also known as river Mandakani) in Chitrakoot is akin to living under the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree of the gods in the heaven). Tulsidas addresses himself and says—'Oh my mind, intellect and heart. You should always remember (submerge yourself in the thoughts of) Laxman, Sri Ram and Sita. '

[Note—Laxman is put in the first place, meaning that stoic, single-minded pursuit of devotion, service, unflinching loyalty, ability to put the Lord's work and the Lord on a superior pedestal than any and all the rest of the things in this world, including self-interest, is more praise worthy and worth emulation than the Lord himself. Laxman here stands for the living being who is advised by the instance of Laxman as how to have devotion for the Supreme Lord and how to serve him with immense faith.

Sita is in the third place—or the third corner of the equilateral triangle—symbolizing the sort of affection, love, endearment and yearning one should have for the Lord. Sita represents the cosmic Maya (the power of the Supreme Lord create delusions).

Sri Ram himself represents the Supreme Being. In an equilateral triangle, all sides and angles are equal—symbolizing no difference between the three of them, but at the same time by putting Sri Ram in the centre, Tulsidas implies that the Lord is the apex of that triangle. But that 'apex' rests on the two essential corners represented by Laxman and Sita. This triangle can be turned on any of its limbs, but the shape would always be the same. The name that one assigns to any such triangle, such as the corners A, B or C, are just for the purpose of understanding and analysis, but essentially there is no difference between any of them.

In other words, the Supreme Being known as Brahm in the Upanishads and as Lord Vishnu in the Purans, the Jiva who is the living being born in this world, and Maya that creates this world on the inspiration of the Lord, are all linked to one another. The creation must have all of them to be complete and be known as the

‘creation and the living world’. Just like the triangle would cease to exist if any of its sides or angles are removed, this creation would cease to exist if any of the three elements that constitute it are removed from the scene. The author hopes that the spiritual and metaphysical import of this triangle sinks in the mind and heart of the reader.]

Geetawali: Raag Chanchari: Verse no. 2/43—

चित्रकूट अति बिचित्र, सुंदर बन, महि पबित्र,
पावनि पय—सरित सकल मल—निकंदिनी ।
सानुज जहँ बसत राम, लोक—लोचनाभिराम,
बाम अंग बामाबर बिस्व—बंदिनी ॥ 1 ॥
रिषिबर तहँ छंद बास, गावत कलकंठ हास,
कीर्तन उनमाय काय क्रोध—कंदिनी ।
बर बिधान करत गान, वारत धन—मान—प्राण,
झरना झर झिंग झिंग जलतरंगिनी ॥ 2 ॥
बर बिहारु चरन चारु पाँडर चंपक चनार
करनहार बार पार पुर—पुरंगिनी ।
जोबन नव ढरत ढार दुत्त मत्त मृग मराल
मंद मंद गुंजत हैं अलि अलिंगिनी ॥ 3 ॥
चितवत मुनिगन चकोर, बैठे निज ठौर ठौर,
अच्छय अकलंक सरद—चंद—चंदिनी ।
उदित सदा बन—अकास, मुदित बदत तुलसिदास,
जय जय रघुनंदन जय जनकनंदिनी ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 2/43—Chitrakoot is very strange, most enchanting, fabulous and marvelous. Its forest is very pleasant and the land is extremely holy and pure. There is a divine and holy river named ‘Payaswini’ (another name of Mandakini) flowing there, a river which is so holy that it is able to destroy all sins and the evil effects of unrighteousness and misdemeanours. It is the place where Lord Ram, who is appealing and pleasing to the eyes of all the creatures in this world, resides along with his younger brother (Laxman). Sita, who is revered and adored by the world and is like a jewel among women, stays to his (Lord Ram's) left. [According to Hindu custom, a wife always stays on the left hand side of her husband.] (1).

Numerous exalted hermits live there freely, without any sort of mental fear or bodily agitation. They not only compose melodious hymns in honour of the Lord as well as adulatory songs extolling and lauding the glories of the Lord but also sing them cheerfully in melodious and sweet voice themselves. Those hermits sing the verses of the Vedas with great respect and according to established norms and standards for such chanting or singing. They sacrifice (offer) all their wealth, honour and life on the Lord (Sri Ram). [That is, they offer all that they have to Lord Ram as they would do to their worshipped deity.] The rivers have swift currents and they make splashing and gurgling sound as they pour water in the form of various water-falls (2).

The women folk of the (surrounding) villages sacrifice themselves at the magnificent and most enchanting sight of Lord Ram (i.e. are enthralled and captivated by the sight of Lord Ram) who walks barefoot among the trees of 'Pandar' (the Balsam plant with yellow flowers), 'Champak' (the Magnolia flower plant), and 'Chanar' (or Kachnar, the tree *Bambinia Variegata*, the flowers of which are used as vegetables). It appears that all the beauty, glamour and enchantment associated with the term 'youth' are being cast in a new mould in the form of the majestic view of the Lord. The deer (i.e. animals) and swans (i.e. birds) are euphoric and cheerfull as they move around excitedly, while the male and female species of the black/bumble-bee are buzzing and humming around sweetly (3).

Sitting in their own hermitages in Chitrakoot, the various hermits and sages who transfix their attention on the thoughts and the divine sight of Lord Ram and Sita represent the Chakor birds (Indian red-legged partridge) which sits in its perch and gazes constantly and without interruption at the enchanting sight of the full moon, accompanied by its beautiful and enchanting light, that rises in the clear sky during the winter season in Chitrakoot. [Here, the sages and the hermits who live in the dense forest of Chitrakoot and spend their time meditating and contemplating on Lord Ram's divine form and name are like the Chakor birds. The beautiful and enchanting sight of Lord Ram is like the full moon, and the equally enchanting sight of Sita accompanying him and giving the Lord an aura of glamour and magnificence is like the rays of the moon. The forest of Chitrakoot where the Lord moves about is like the sky where the full moon moves from one end of the sky to another in the night.]

Tulsidas also fixes his gaze on the divine sight of Lord Ram and Sita, and enthusiastically applauds them most cheerfully, saying, 'Hail Raghunandan (Lord Ram) and Hail Janaknandini (Sita)! Glory to both of you!' (4).

Geetawali: Raag Malaar: Verse no. 2/50—

सब दिन चित्रकूट नीको लागत ।
 बरषात्रुत्तु प्रबेस बिसेष गिरि देखन मन अनुरागत ॥ 1 ॥
 चहुँदिसि बन संपन्न, बिहँग-मृग बोलत सोभा पावत ।
 जनु सुनरेस देस-पुर प्रमुदित प्रजा सकल सुख छावत ॥ 2 ॥
 सोहत स्याम जलद मृदु घोरत धातु रँगमगे सृंगनि ।
 मनहु आदि अंभोज बिराजत सेवित सुर-मुनि-भृंगनि ॥ 3 ॥
 सिखर परस घन-घटहि, मिलति बग-पाँति सो छबि कबि बरनी ।
 आदि बराह बिहरी बारिधि मनो उठ्यो है दसन धरि धरनी ॥ 4 ॥
 जल जुत बिमल सिलनि झलकत नभ बन-प्रतिबिंब तरंग ।
 मानहु जग-रचना बिचित्र बिलसति बिराट अँग अँग ॥ 5 ॥
 मंदाकिनिहि मिलत झरना झरि झरि भरि भरि जल आछे ।
 तुलसी सकल सुकृत-सुख लागे मानो राम-भगतिके पाछे ॥ 6 ॥

Verse no. 2/50—The mountains of Chitrakoot always look most fascinating, pleasant and appealing. With the onset of the rainy season, the mind and heart becomes very eager to see it (because of its magnificent, fabulous and stupendous beauty) (1).

Surrounding it on all the four sides are forests laden with flowers and fruits. The fearless and happy chirping of birds and the clamour of animals roaming around in those forests appears to resemble the happy and contented subjects of a noble and benevolent king who are enjoying all types of comforts, pleasures and prosperity in the capital city as well as other parts of the realm during his prosperous reign (2).

Dark clouds rumbling softly over mountain tops having different hues and shades of colour (because their rocks have different constituents elements and shapes, reflecting light in different ways) look as magnificent as the celestial lotus (from which the creator Brahma emerged in the beginning of creation) which is being served by the gods, sages and hermits in the form of the black bees who flock around this lotus. [The mountain peaks are the multi-coloured petals of lotus from which the creator Brahma was created, the rumbling of the clouds is the buzzing and humming of the bees, the colours of the rocks are like the hermits and sages attired in different coloured robes who had assembled to show their respect to this divine lotus, and the divine ambience of the whole environment represent the Gods who had assembled there to offer their obeisance to this divine lotus.] (3).

When the rows of cranes sitting on the peaks of these mountains and hill tops are seen in the background of the dark clouds in the sky as well as the clouds that embrace these peaks and tops themselves, this sight of exceptional beauty is described by an expert poet as one which resembles the scene of the legendary Boar (who is one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu) who had emerged from the ocean with the earth held on his snout between the pair of white teeth. [Here, the mountains are the ‘Boar’, the row of cranes is the ‘white teeth’, and the dark clouds are the ‘earth’.] (4).

In the clean puddles formed in the hollows of rocks and boulders, the reflection of the sky and the forest is like the mysterious creation called the Universe (or world) which is seen in (or is contained in) every part of the body of the ‘Viraat Purush’. [The word ‘Viraat’ means huge, large, big, colossal, all-encompassing, while the word ‘Purush’ means the primary and primordial Male of creation. The phrase ‘Viraat Purush’ refers to the invisible, all-encompassing macrocosmic form of the Supreme Lord from whom this whole universe is said to have been revealed, and each pore of this Lord’s macrocosmic body is said to harbour countless worlds.] (5).

Tulsidas says that waterfalls full of crystal clear water cascade down to merge with the river Mandakini below as if all the good deeds and their attendant happiness pursue those who follow the path of devotion for Lord Ram (6).”

{Meanwhile, Ayodhya wore a desolate look without Lord Ram. Tulsidas has poignantly narrated the woeful scene through the eyes and words of Kaushalya, Lord Ram’s mother, in Geetawali, verse nos. 2/51 and 2/54 as follows—}

Geetawali: Raag Sorath: Verse no. 2/51—

आजुको भोर, और सो, माई।
 सुनौं न द्वार बेद-बंदी-धुनि गुनिगन-गिरा सोहाई॥ 1॥
 निज निज सुंदर पति-सदननितै रूप-सील-छबिछाई।
 लेन असीस सीय आगे करि मोपै सुतबधू न आई॥ 2॥
 बूझी हौं न बिहँसि मेरे रघुबर 'कहाँ री ! सुमित्रा माता ?'।
 तुलसी मनहु महासुख मेरो देखि न सकेउ बिधाता॥ 3॥

Verse no. 2/51—[Extremely remorseful and contrite on separation from her beloved son Sri Ram, mother Kaushalya expresses her sense of profound anguish and deep sorrow to another old woman and laments as follows—] 'Oh Mother! Today's dawn looks different to me. [This line indicates that it is the day following the one in which Sri Ram proceeded to his exile.] Neither the singing of the Vedas nor the voices of royal bards and heralds are heard at the palace gates today, sounds that used to please the sages and seers and were pleasant for the ears to hear. [It was customary that royal bards and singers used to recite the hymns of the Vedas and other scriptures near the royal palace. But from the day Lord Ram had gone to the forest, a thick pall of gloom and hopelessness had descended upon the city. No one had the inclination or the interest to sing anything and chant the hymns in an atmosphere of overriding grief and mental agony. This is what Kaushalya is alluding to.] (1).

Even my daughter-in-laws who are endowed with beauty, charm, virtues and magnificence have not come out of their husband's places, and with Sita in the lead, have not come to take my blessings (or pay respects to me as they used to do daily previously) (2).

Today, Sri Raghubar (Sri Ram) has not smilingly asked me, 'Oh Mother! Where is mother Sumitra?' Alas! It seems my immense good fortune and profound joys and happiness were too much for the creator to bear. [So the creator snatched my happiness from me by creating a situation whereby my beloved son Ram was sent to exile in the forest with my equally dear daughter-in-law Sita and my dear son Laxman. He was jealous of my happiness and luck, and out of malice and envy he snatched my peace and happiness from me by sending Sri Ram, Laxman, Sita to exile.] (3).

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/54—

जब जब भवन बिलोकति सूनो।
 तब तब बिकल होति कौसल्या, दिन दिन प्रति दुख दूनो॥ 1॥
 सुमिरत बाल-बिनोद रामके सुंदर मुनि-मन-हारी।
 होत हृदय अति सूल समुझि पदपंकज अजिर-बिहारी॥ 2॥
 को अब प्रात कलेऊ माँगत रूठि चलैगो, माई !।
 स्याम-तामरस-नैन स्रवत जल काहि लेउँ उर लाई॥ 3॥
 जीवौं तौ बिपति सहौं निसि-बासर, मरौं तौ मन पछितायो।
 चलत बिपिन भरि नयन रामको बदन न देखन पायो॥ 4॥
 तुलसिदास यह दुसह दसा अति, दारुन बिरह घनेरो।
 दूरि करै को भूरि कृपा बिनु सोकजनित रुज मेरो ?॥ 5॥

Verse no. 2/54—Whenever mother Kaushalya sees the vacant house, she becomes emotionally very upset, agitated and extremely distraught. Her sorrow, anguish and agonies are increasing day by day (1).

She recalls the childish pranks and frolicking of Sri Ram when the Lord was a child; his childhood days and their memories are so pleasant and enchanting that they captivate the mind and heart of sages, seers and hermits. She is further tormented by the thought of Sri Ram's lotus-like, soft and delicate feet which were fit only for the floor of the royal palace. [Sri Ram was not accustomed to walk barefoot on hard, stony, thorny, rough ground. When the mother thinks of the pain and difficulties that Sri Ram will have to cope with while walking in the forest, her agonies, anguish and sorrows know no bounds.] (2).

[Recalling Lord Ram's childhood days, she addresses the same old lady companion and laments woefully—] 'Oh Mother! Who will now run away from me annoyed at the breakfast getting late as soon as it is day dawns, and whom will I embrace on seeing tears rolling down from his blue lotus-like eyes? (3).

If I live now, I will have to cope with the sorrows and agonies day and night, while if I die, I will have the regret that I could not see Ram's face to my heart's content before he went to the forest (4).

This is a very perplexing and wretched situation; it's a very grave agony of separation. Who is there in this world who can remove my huge sorrows, agonies and tribulations without the extreme grace and kindness of the Lord? [That is, my sorrows and agonies can only be removed if the Lord himself wants. It however seems insurmountable for me.] (5)."

{Now, let's come back to the point where the charioteer, Sumantra, was told by the Lord to return to Ayodhya. He came back with a heavy heart and crestfallen as if he has lost everything in this world.}

Minister and Charioteer Sumantra's return to Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

कहेउँ राम बन गवन सुहावा । सुनहु सुमंत्र अवध जिमि आवा ॥ [2/142/4]
 सोच सुमंत्र बिकल दुख दीना । धिग जीवन रघुबीर बिहीना ॥ [2/144/3]
 पैठत नगर सचिव सकुचाई । जनु मारेसि गुर बाँभन गाई ॥ 3
 बैठि बिटप तर दिवसु गवाँवा । साँझ समय तब अवसर पावा ॥ 4
 अवध प्रबेसु कीन्ह अँधिआरे । पैठ भवन रथु राखि दुआरे ॥ 5 [2/147/3-5]

The story of Lord Ram's departure for the forest has been told so far. Now let's hear how Sumantra, the charioteer, came back to Ayodhya (to report the matter to king Dasrath) (2/142/4).

He was struck with grief and full of lamentations as he wailed, 'Cursed is this life without Lord Ram.' (2/144/3).

At Ayodhya, he hesitated to enter the city by daylight as if he has murdered his own guru (teacher), a Brahmin (some holy man) and cows (2/147/3). So he spent the day under a tree, and got an opportunity to enter the city after twilight, in the dark (4). He left the chariot at the gate and stealthily entered the palace compound (5) [2/147/3-5].

{As soon as Dasrath heard that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita did not come back but went ahead to the forest, he laments gravely and was so shocked and overcome with grief that shortly after the return of Sumantra he died. }

King Dasrath's death: Ram Charit Manas

भूप सुमंत्रु लीन्ह उर लाई । बूड़त कछु अधार जनु पाई ॥1
सहित सनेह निकट बैठारी । पूँछत राउ नयन भरि बारी ॥2
राम कुसल कहु सखा सनेही । कहँ रघुनाथु लखनु बैदेही ॥3
आने फेरि कि बनहि सिधाए । सुनत सचिव लोचन जल छाए ॥4 [2/149/1-4]

King Dasrath embraced Sumantra tightly as if a drowning man has laid his hands on some float or a life-buoy (1). He seated him near himself and asked with his eyes full of tears (2), 'Friend, apprise me of Ram's welfare; where are Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita? (3). Did you bring them back or did they proceed to the forest?'

Hearing these sorrowful words, tears welled-up in the eyes of the minister (Sumantra) (4). [2/149/1-4].

[Note : Sumantra's silence and tears were enough for Dasrath to realise that Ram has not come back.]

दोहा- राम राम कहि राम कहि राम राम कहि राम ।
तनु परिहरि रघुबर बिरहँ राउ गयउ सुरधाम ॥ [Doha 2/155.]

When the king realised that the Lord hasn't come back, he cried "Ram, Ram" repeatedly, and cast-off his mortal body in the agony of Lord Ram's separation and went to the abode of the Gods (i.e. he died) (Doha 2/155).

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/56—

सुन्यौ जब फिरि सुमंत पुर आयो ।
कहिहै कहा, प्रानपतिकी गति, नृपति बिकल उठि धायो ॥ 1 ॥
पाँय परत मंत्री अति ब्याकुल, नृप उठाय उर लायो ।
दसरथ—दसा देखि न कह्यो कछु, हरि जो सँदेस पढायो ॥ 2 ॥
बूझि न सकत कुसल प्रीतमकी, हृदय यहै पछितायो ।
साँचेहु सुत—बियोग सुनिबे कहँ धिग बिधि मोहि जिआयो ॥ 3 ॥
तुलसिदास प्रभु जानि निटुर हौं न्याय नाथ बिसरायो ।

हा रघुपति कहि पर्यो अग्नि, जनु जलतें मीन बिलगायो॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/56—When the king (Dasrath) heard that Sumantra has come back to Ayodhya, then eagerly desirous of finding out what news or information he has brought back concerning the ‘Lord of his soul’ (i.e. Sri Ram), he rushed forward anxiously to meet him (1).

Then, seeing the minister (Sumantra) falling at his feet full of remorse and emotionally upset, the king lifted him and clasped him to his bosom; and the minister, too, seeing the miserable and wretched condition of the king, did not say a word about the message that Hari (Sri Ram) had sent (2).

(So overwhelmed and distressed was Dasrath with sorrows, regrets, remorse and lamentation that—) He could not ask about the welfare of his son (Sri Ram) because he was full of remorse and contrition and regretted that the creator has kept him alive to hear of the news of his dear son's separation—it was a curse for him (3).

Tulsidas adds that the king began to feel extremely contrite and remorseful. He lamented woefully—‘Regarding me as being stone-hearted and stern or loveless, it is proper and fit that the Lord (Ram) has forsaken me’. And then, crying and wailing in a most distraught manner, he wept, calling out the Lord’s name repeatedly—‘Oh Raghupati (Ram)’—as he fell to the ground (i.e. fainted) as if a fish has been taken out of the water (4).”

Geetawali: Raag Gauri: Verse no. 2/59—

करत राउ मनमों अनुमान ।
 सोक-बिकल, मुख बचन न आवै, बिछुरै कृपानिधान॥ 1॥
 राज देन कहि बोलि नारि-बस मैं जो कह्यो बन जान ।
 आयसु सिर धरि चले हरषि हिय कानन भवन समान॥ 2॥
 ऐसे सुतके बिरह-अवधि लौं जौ राखौ यह प्रान ।
 तौ मिटि जाइ प्रीतिकी परमिति, अजस सुनौं निज कान॥ 3॥
 राम गए अजहूँ हौं जीवत, समुझत हिय अकुलान ।
 तुलसिदास तनु तजि रघुपति हित कियो प्रेम परवान॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/59—The abode of mercy, compassion, benevolence and grace, Sri Ram, has been separated from him—this has caused immense perplexity, mental agony, anguish, sorrows and distress to Dasrath so much so that he is unable to speak; he broods in contrition and grief, ‘Ah! When I called him (Sri Ram) and, under the influence (or a wicked spell) of a woman (Kaikeyi), I told him to go to the forest instead of anointing him as prince regent—at that time, he had obeyed my orders (literally, kept my words over his head as if in great reverence and honour) and had gone to the forest cheerfully, without a trace of regret or unhappiness or anger, as if he (Ram) was proceeding to his own home. If I keep myself alive during the period of separation (extending to fourteen years of Ram's exile), it would violate or breach the high standards needed to have love and affection for someone who is extremely dear. Besides this, I will have to bear the

ignominy and hear derogatory, defamatory remarks with my own ears (i.e. I'll have to bear with infamy for ever). (1-3).

‘Alas! I am still alive inspite of Sri Ram going away from here’—thinking thus, his heart became distressful and utterly miserable and woeful. Tulsidas says that at that moment he left his mortal coil (the mortal physical body, i.e. he died) to prove (establish) his (deep and abiding) love and affection for Sri Raghupati (Sri Ram) for all times to come). [That is, by dying in the sorrow of Lord Ram's separation, king Dasrath washed away the ignominy and the degradation that his act of sending the Lord to the forest had brought to him unwittingly. He had proved that he was driven by fate to do what he was forced to do, but he should not be treated as being a willing conspirator in the Lord's forest exile and the suffering through which he had to undergo there. By his death king Dasrath proved that he did love Lord Ram sincerely and most deeply, but he had to accept the will of providence and fate against which he had no control or the power to resist or oppose it.] (4).”

{At that time, Bharat was in his maternal uncle's place. When Dasrath died, a messenger was sent to bring him back to Ayodhya.}

Arrival of Bharat: Ram Charit Manas

तेल नावँ भरि नृप तनु राखा । दूत बोलाइ बहुरि अस भाषा ॥ 1
धावहु बेगि भरत पहिँ जाहू । नृप सुधि कतहुँ कहहु जनि काहू ॥ 2
एतनेइ कहेहु भरत सन जाई । गुर बोलाइ पठयउ दोउ भाई ॥ 3 [2/157/1-3]

Dasrath's dead body was kept in a boat (i.e. a large trough) filled with oil (to prevent decomposition), and then Vashistha called the royal messengers (1) and ordered them ‘Run quickly to Bharat; but do not let anyone know the fate of King Dasrath (that he has died) (2). Just go and tell Bharat only this much that his Guru (i.e. sage Vashistha) has called him back to Ayodhya very urgently.’ (3) [2/157/1-3].

एक निमेष बरष सम जाई । एहि बिधि भरत नगर निअराई ॥ 3
असगुन होहिँ नगर पैठारा । रटहिँ कुभाँति कुखेत करारा ॥ 4 [2/158/3-4]

As Bharat rushed to Ayodhya, each passing moment appeared like a year to him (3). As he entered the city, evil omens occurred to him—such as the crows who cawed in ominous ways at the most undesirable of places (4). [2/157/3-4].

Bharat's Lamentations and expression of Shock and Distress: Ram Charit Manas

कलुक् काज बिधि बीच बिगारेउ । भूपति सुरपति पुर पगु धारेउ ॥ 2
सुनत भरतु भए बिबस बिषादा । जनु सहमेउ करि केहरि नादा ॥ 3

तात तात हा तात पुकारी । परे भूमितल ब्याकुल भारी ।।4
 दोहा- भरतहि बिसरेउ पितु मरन सुनत राम बन गौनु ।
 हेतु अपनपउ जानि जियँ थकित रहे धरि मौनु ।। [Chaupai lines 2/160/2-4, Doha 160.]

On seeing her son (Bharat), Kaikeyi boasted that she had made all arrangements conducive to making Bharat the king, but Gods have marred and interfered with the plans a little, and the king has expired (2). On hearing this, Bharat was overcome with grief like an elephant who has become afraid at the lion's roar (3). Crying 'Oh father', he fell down, lamenting and grieving immensely (4). But when he finally learnt about Lord Ram's exile to the forest, he forgot his father. And when he realised that he was the root cause of all this mischief and the upheaval that has rocked his family and the kingdom, he was stunned, stupefied and dumbfounded [Chaupai lines 2/160/2-4, Doha 160].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/60—

ऐसे तैं क्यों कटु बचन कह्यो री ?
 'राम जाहु कानन', कठोर तेरो कैसे धौं हृदय रह्यो, री ।।1
 दिनकर-बंस, पिता दसरथ-से, राम-लखन-से भाई ।
 जननी ! तू जननी ? तौ कहा कहौं, बिधि केहि खोरि न लाई ? ।।2
 हौं लहिहौं सुख राजमातु ह्वै, सुत सिर छत्र धरैगो ।
 कुल-कलंक मल-मूल, मनोरथ तव बिनु कौन करैगो ? ।।3
 ऐहैं राम, सुखी सब ह्वैहैं, ईस अजस मेरो हरिहैं ।
 तुलसिदास मोको बड़ो सोच है, तू जनम कौनि बिधि भरिहै ।।4 [2/60]

Verse no. 2/60—Vehemently scolding and taking to task his mother, Bharat tells her, 'Oh You wretched woman! How could you utter the harsh words 'Ram go to the forest'? How could your heart be so cruel? (1) Oh, I was so fortunate that I got birth in the Solar-race, had king Dasrath as a father and Ram-Laxman as brothers. And for mother, I got you (How shameful it is for me)! What can I say for I'm utterly ashamed of myself (2). Who else but you could have thought that your son would wear the crown and rule, and you would be honoured as Queen-mother (3)? Lord Ram shall come back, the people shall be happy once more, and God will forgive me—but what about you? How will you spend the rest of your days after such an ignoble and detestable deed? (4). [2/60].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/61—

ताते हौं देत न दूषन तोहू ।
 रामबिरोधी उर कठोरतें प्रगट कियो है बिधि मोहू ।।1
 सुंदर सुखद सुसील सुधानिधि, जरनि जाइ जिहि जोए ।
 बिष-बारुनी-बंधु कहियत बिधु ! नातो मित्त न धोए ।।2
 होते जौ न सुजान-सिरोमनि राम सबके मन माहीं ।
 तौ तोरी करतूति, मातु ! सुनि प्रीति-प्रतीति कहा हीं ? ।।3

मृदु मंजुल सींची-सनेह सुचि सुनत भरत-बर-बानी ।
तुलसी 'साधु-साधु' सुर-नर-मुनि कहत प्रेम पहिचानी ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 2/61—[Bharat is seething with anger and is full of remorse; he severely reprimands his mother—] ‘The creator has made (forced) me take birth from the (womb of) one whose heart is opposed (or is malicious) towards Sri Ram, that is why I cannot blame you (because it is the creator’s fault that he made my your son). [Bharat tells Kaikeyi that he is absolutely and extremely ashamed to be her son. It would have been better if he was not born at all.] (1).

See! The moon is called the brother of poison and liquor (or harmful intoxicants) though its mere sighting calms down all types of torments and heats (i.e. the mere sight of the moon is very soothing and comforting for the agitated nerves), though it is so very enchanting and beautiful, though it is a provider of comfort and solace, though it is cool and soothing, and though it is regarded as a receptacle of Amrit (elixir; nectar)! [It means that inspite of having such good and graceful characteristics; the moon still faces infamy and disgrace for no fault of its own. The moon is called a ‘brother of poison and liquor’ because all the three were born at the time of the legendary churning of the ocean by the Gods and demons.] It is true that relations cannot be washed (or wished) off so easily (2).

If Sri Ram—who is the most exalted among gentlemen and noble persons—had not resided in the heart of all, then oh mother, considering your wicked deeds, how could he have had affection and endearment left for me in his heart? [Sri Ram knows that I am not a party to your conspiracy and nefarious designs. That is why I am sure his love and affection for me still remains the same inspite of your horrific misdemeanours, your malicious, capricious, short-sighted evil deeds.]’ (3).

Tulsidas says that hearing these most sweet, pleasant, truthful and honest words of Bharat, words that were imbued in love and affection, and recognizing his deep reverence for Sri Ram, the Gods, the humans and the congregation of hermits and sages lauded Bharat by saying ‘Sadhu-Sadhu’ (truly holy and truthful), and praised his integrity, his sense of probity and propriety, and his love for Lord Ram. [This is a form of exclamation ‘Sadhu Sadhu’ means ‘saintly, truthful, honest and pure’. It means here that they applauded what Bharat had said, and endorsed it as being a honest and truthful statement.] (4).”

{After some time passed, a meeting was called. All the ministers and courtiers assembled, as well as the chief citizens of Ayodhya, and the meeting was presided over by sage Vashistha. They were of the unanimous view that Bharat should accept the crown till Lord Ram does not come back from the forest because the throne cannot be allowed to remain vacant. But Bharat was unmoved—he flatly refused, saying that instead of this he would prefer to go to the forest and try to persuade Lord Ram to come back.

This decision of Bharat made him dear to the masses instantly. They had expected that he would accept the throne and thought that he was a part to the conspiracy hatched by his mother Kaikeyi. The refusal of Bharat to accept the crown that rightfully belonged to his elder brother Ram made Bharat remembered in history as a shining example of

brotherhood, renunciation, dispassion, propriety, righteousness, morality and ethical conduct that became a hallmark of these virtues in the realm of history.}

Refusal of Bharat to accept the crown: Ram Charit Manas

सुदिनु सोधि मुनिबर तब आए । सचिव महाजन सकल बोलाए ॥2
 बैठे राजसभाँ सब जाई । पठए बोलि भरत दोउ भाई ॥3
 भरतु बसिष्ठ निकट बैठारे । नीति धरममय बचन उचारे ॥4 [2/171/2-4]
 सब प्रकार भूपति बड़भागी । बादि बिषादु करिअ तेहि लागी ॥1
 यह सुनि समुझि सोचु परिहरहू । सिर धरि राज रजायसु करहू ॥2
 करहु सीस धरि भूप रजाई । हइ तुम्ह कहँ सब भाँति भलाई ॥6 [2/174/1-2, 6]
 करहु राजु परिहरहु गलानी । मानहु मोर बचन हित जानी ॥ [2/175/4]
 दोहा- कीजिअ गुर आयसु अवसि कहहिं सचिव कर जोरि ।
 रघुपति आएँ उचित जस तस तब करब बहोरि ॥ [Doha 2/175]
 कौसल्या धरि धीरजु कहई । पूत पथ्य गुर आयसु अहई ॥ [Chaupai lines 2/176/1]

Deciding on an auspicious time, the royal teacher sage Vashistha came and summoned all the ministers and elite of the city for a meeting (2). They all assembled in the council chamber and then called for Bharat (3). He came and was seated next to Vashistha, who spoke to him in words full of wisdom, piety and appropriate for the occasion (4) [2/171/2-4]. In essence he told Bharat that his father was blessed in every way, and there is no use in mourning for him any longer (1). 'Bearing this in mind, do not have sorrow and do not feel contrite, and instead obey reverentially the King's command (2). Redeem your father's words, and in doing so, you will be benefitted in all possible ways (6) [2/174/1-2,6].

Therefore, have no more remorse, and rule the kingdom. Accept my advice as salutary, and as being for your best of interests (2/175/4).'

Even the chief minister exhorted Bharat politely with folded hands (i.e. with both the palms touching each other as a gesture of request) to obey the advice given by Vashistha. He advised Bharat that when Lord Ram comes back from exile the things may be decided according to the then prevalent circumstances and in an appropriate manner (Doha 2/175).

The regent queen mother Kaushalya gathered courage and asked Bharat to obey Guru Vashistha's command as being salutary and in his best of interests. [That is, she also requested Bharat to accept the crown.] (2/176/1).

हित हमार सियपति सेवकाई । सो हरि लीन्ह मातु कुटिलाई ॥1
 मैं अनुमानि दीख मन माहीं । आन उपायँ मोर हित नाहीं ॥2
 जायँ जीव बिनु देह सुहाई । बादि मोर सबु बिनु रघुराई ॥6
 जाउँ राम पहिँ आयसु देहू । एकहिँ आँक मोर हित एहू ॥7 [2/178/1-2,6-7]
 आन उपाउ मोहि नहिँ सूझा । को जिय कै रघुबर बिनु बूझा ॥1
 एकहिँ आँक इहइ मन माहीं । प्रातकाल चलिहउँ प्रभु पाहीं ॥2 [2/183/1-2]

भरत बचन सब कहँ प्रिय लागे । राम सनेह सुधौं जनु पागे ॥ [2/184/1]
 दोहा- अवसिचलिअ बन रामु जहँ भरत मंत्रु भल कीन्ह ।
 सोक सिंधु बूड़त सबहि तुम्ह अवलंबनु दीन्ह ॥ [Doha 2/184.]
 चलत प्रात लखि निरनउ नीके । भरतु प्रानप्रिय भे सबही के ॥ [2/185/2]

But Bharat refused to accept the crown of the kingdom. His reply was exemplary and most apt for the time. He said—‘My good and welfare lies in the service of Lord Ram, and I have been deprived of this privilege by perversity and selfishness of my (wicked) mother (1). I have pondered over the whole matter and have come to the conclusion that my good lies in no other way (2). Even as a handsome body is of no use without the life (soul) in it, all things are equivalent to naught for me without Lord Ram (6). So, all of you must grant me permission to go to Lord Ram—my good is exclusively in this deed (7). [2/178/1-2, 6-7]. I find no other remedy for this affliction, and who can see inside my heart accept Lord Ram (that I am telling the truth) (1). I have only one resolve, and that is to proceed to the place where Lord Ram lives early the next morning (2)[2/183/1-2].’

These words of Bharat pleased all the council members, and it appeared that they were drenched in the nectar of Lord Ram's devotion (that overflowed and submerged everyone on that occasion) (1). They all unanimously praised Bharat for his wise decision and decided to proceed to the forest; it appeared that Bharat provided them with a life-guard (a buoy) while they were drowning in the ocean of grief of being separated from their beloved Lord Ram [2/184/1,0].

Outside the council chamber, when the citizen of Ayodhya heard about Bharat's decision to start for Lord Ram's abode the next morning, they became jubilant and began to love him as they would their own life [Doha 2/185].

Departure of Bharat for Chitrakoot: Ram Charit Manas

जागत सब निसि भयउ बिहाना । भरत बोलाए सचिव सुजाना ॥2
 कहेउ लेहु सब तिलक समाजू । बनहिं देब मुनि रामहि राजू ॥3
 बेगि चलहु सुनि सचिव जोहारे । तुरत तुरग रथ नाग सँवारे ॥4 [2/187/2-4]
 दोहा- सौंषि नगर सुचि सेवकनि सादर सकल चलाइ ।
 सुमिरि राम सिय चरन तब चले भरत दोउ भाइ ॥ [Doha 2/187.]

The citizens kept awake the whole night (in excited anticipation of departure for Chitrakoot the next morning). The next morning, Bharat summoned his wise ministers (2). He asked them to take along all necessary equipment and paraphernalia for a king's installation ceremony, for sage Vashistha shall crown Lord Ram king in the forest itself (3). He ordered them not to delay, so they expeditiously collected and equipped horses, chariots and elephants for the journey (4). [2/187/2-4]. Then, he left the city of Ayodhya in charge of faithful and loyal servants, and sending the party ahead, the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) followed in the rear, constantly remembering the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita. [Doha 2/187].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/64—

मेरो अवध धौं कहहु, कहा है ।
 करहु राज रघुराज-चरन तजि, लै लटि लोगु रहा है ।।1
 धन्य मातु, हौं धन्य, लागि जेहि राज-समाज ढहा है ।
 तापर मोको प्रभु करि चाहत सब बिनु दहन दहा है ।।2
 राम-सपथ, कोउ कछू कहै जनि, मैं दुख दुसह सहा है ।
 चित्रकूट चलिए सब मिलि, बलि, छमिए मोहि हहा है ।।3
 यों कहि भोर भरत गिरिवरको मारग बूझि गहा है ।
 सकल सराहत, एक भरत जग जनमि सुलाहु लहा है ।।4
 जानहिं सिय-रघुनाथ भरतको सील सनेह महा है ।
 कै तुलसी जाको राम-नामसों प्रेम-नेम निबहा है ।।5 [2/64]

Verse no. 2/64—Bharat said, ‘Tell me, what do I have left for me at Ayodhya? People advise me to rule the kingdom at the cost of abandoning the chance to serve Lord Ram’s feet; they all beat the same drum (1). Thanks to my mother and thanks to me for whom all this mischief was created! In spite of all this, you people want to crown me king and wish to burn yourselves without a fire (2). In the name of Lord Ram, please do not tell me anything anymore. I have tolerated immense sorrows already. I urge you, come forward. Let us all start for Chitrakoot. I beg you to forgive and excuse me (3).’

Saying this to indicate his final decision, and as soon as the day next day dawned the next morning, Bharat asked the way and started on the journey for Chitrakoot. All the people praised him, saying, ‘Bharat has gained the real benefit of taking birth (because he has stood the test of Dharma—the laws governing ethical conduct, righteousness, probity and propriety)!’ (4).

Tulsidas says Bharat’s love, affection and conduct are known either to Lord Ram and Sita or to those who have great affection and attachment to the holy name of Lord Ram². (5).

[Note—¹That is, the citizens of Ayodhya were very glad at this decision of Bharat not to accept the crown and instead go to the forest and bring Lord Ram back by asking for forgiveness and pleading with the Lord that he has no role to play in this sordid drama which was a conspiracy hatched by his mother alone without his remotest consent. Bharat was very wise for he knew that if he accepted the crown under pressure of any kind, the world and Lord Ram would think that he was a party to the conspiracy, and this ignominy of being one who had schemed to send his older brother to the forest in the greed of the kingdom would be impossible for him to shake off for all times to come, whereas the fact was that he was totally innocent. It was also sure that then Lord Ram would never return back even after the expiry of the fourteen year exile period thinking that if Bharat wants to have the kingdom then let him have it. Why? Because Bharat knew that the Lord loved him very much and would prefer to abdicate the throne in his favour instead of claiming his rights and fighting for it. When the brothers were young, Ram used to lose a game voluntarily so that Bharat could win—Bharat knew that. Now it was a test for Bharat to reciprocate the same sentiments and tell the Lord that his love for him was no less than the Lord’s love for him. The story of Lord Ram going to the forest so that Bharat could get the kingdom, and of Bharat refusing

the crown saying that it rightly belongs to the Lord, his going to the forest to try his best to bring the Lord back, and in the eventuality of the Lord refusing to oblige him spending the fourteen years of the exile period observing severe austerity and doing penance like a reclusive hermit is a sterling instance of brotherly love and affection, of how one should behave in this world according to the laws of Dharma—the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety and good conduct.

²This is because ordinary people would have expected Bharat to accept the crown, especially when his Guru, ministers, mothers and elderly citizens are advising him to do so, and even telling him that if he did accept the crown till Lord Ram comes back he would not be violating any law as this was the wish of his dead father. He would simply be obeying them like his elder brother Sri Ram who had gone to the forest precisely to obey his father's command and his mother's wish. From the practical point also this would be in perfect order—because when a king or an emperor is out of the capital or has gone on a long campaign somewhere, someone is invariably appointed to look after the routine affairs of the kingdom or the empire till the time the king or the emperor comes back. But such people who would advocate Bharat's ascending the throne of Ayodhya do not realise the rules of love and devotion which were the guiding principles for Bharat's exemplary conduct. On more than one occasion Bharat had clearly stated that for him all the laws and regulation are valid only if they are Ram-specific, only if they help him to serve the Lord, and if they fail to do so he is not bothered about their sanctity and validity whatsoever. Bharat's character and the example that he has set was to become a gold-standard and a touchstone against which the world would measure and judge the purity of love, affection, submission and devotion for the Supreme Lord for all times to come. We must note that the story of the Ramayana is told to teach the human being how he should act and conduct himself in this world, how goodness, love, amity and brotherhood can be established in his life, and how he can get peace of mind and good fame instead of being materialistic and an opportunist.]

Bharat En-route to Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram: Ram Charit Manas

गवने भरत पयादेहिं पाए । कोतल संग जाहिं डोरिआए ॥ 4
 कहहिं सुसेवक बारहिं बारा । होइअ नाथ अस्व असवारा ॥ 5
 रामु पयादेहि पायँ सिधाए । हम कहँ रथ गज बाजि बनाए ॥ 6
 सिर भर जाउँ उचित अस मोरा । सब तैं सेवक धरम कठोरा ॥ 7 [2/203/4-7]
 झलका झलकत पायन्ह कैसें । पंकज कोस ओस कन जैसें ॥ 1 [2/204/1]
 नहिं पद त्रान सीस नहिं छाया । पेमु नेमु ब्रतु धरमु अमाया ॥ 5 [2/216/5]
 दोहा- किऐँ जाहिं छाया जलद सुखद बहइ बर बात ।
 तस मगु भयउ न राम कहँ जस भा भरतहिं जात ॥ [Doha 2/216.]

Bharat was proceeding barefoot while the horses meant for him trotted along, their bridles held by their attendants who also walked along (4). The servants repeatedly

requested Bharat to mount the horses (5), but Bharat refused, sarcastically commenting that Lord Ram had gone barefoot to the forest while horses, chariots and elephants are meant for him! He retorted—‘I should have walked on my head because a servant's duties are the most difficult to observe.’ [Bharat chided his servants to stop nagging him to ride the horse. If Lord Ram was forced to walk barefoot, what right does he have to mount a horse, a chariot or an elephant? He should have walked on his head as a token or a sign of his punishment or repentance for being the cause of giving the Lord so much trouble, and instead the servants are asking him to mount a horse! It's unthinkable for him.] (6/7) [2/203/4-7].

So he continued to walk barefoot on the hard earth, as a result of which blisters formed under his feet, and they (blisters) glistened like dew drops do on lotus buds. [The soles of the feet are compared to the lotus buds, and the blisters that oozed watery serum from the injured skin glistened like the dew drops.] (2/204/1).

He had no footwear in his feet or an umbrella on his head. His love, self-discipline, austerity and piety were exemplary, stellar, honest and truthful (i.e. he was not pretending, and there was no deceit in his behaviour) (5). But so much was his affection and devotion for Lord Ram that Nature itself provided him the comfort which Lord Ram lacked while on the journey—for instance, the clouds offered him shade (from the scorching sun), and a soft and pleasant breeze soothed (massaged, gave comfort to) his weary body all along the way (2/216/5,0).

{Bharat reaches Srīng-ber-pur, the place where the chief of the boatman community, i.e. Nishad who was also called Guha, lived. This is the first day out of Ayodhya.}

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/68—

ता दिन सृंगबेरपुर आए ।
 राम-सखा ते समाचार सुनि बारि बिलोचन छाए ॥1
 कुस- साथरी देखि रघुपति की हेतु अपनपौ जानी ।
 कहत कथा सिय-राम-लषनकी बैठेहि रैन बिहानी ॥2
 भोरहि भरद्वाज आश्रम ह्वै, करि निषादपति आगे ।
 चले जनु तक्यो तड़ाग तृषित गज घोर घामके लागे ॥3
 बूझत ‘चित्रकूट कहँ’ जेहि तेहि, मुनि बालकनि बतायो ।
 तुलसी मनहु फनिक मनि, ढूँढ़त, निरखि हरषि हिय धायो ॥4 [2/68]

Verse no. 2/68—Bharat reached Srīng-ber-pur (that day). He met Lord Ram's friend Guha, and hearing Lord Ram's news from him, tears welled-up in Bharat's eyes (1). Seeing the temporary bed made of grass on which Lord Ram had taken rest, and finding himself the cause of all his (Ram's) miseries and troubles, Bharat spent the whole sleepless night remembering the Lord (2). As soon as the next day dawned, taking the king of Nishads (boatman community) as a guide, he proceeded towards the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj. Bharat looked as eager and anxious as a thirsty elephant, who is extremely distressed by the hot summer heat, when he sees some watering hole (such as a

pond). [A thirsty elephant is very anxious for water, and he looks here and there for some water body so that he can quench his thirst, for otherwise he would die. And when he finally locates on such watering hole, the elephant makes a mad dash for it. The condition of Bharat was almost the same. He yearned to have sight of his beloved Lord Ram, and was looking excitedly hither and thither, hoping against odds that he would be able to get a hint of the Lord somewhere. So when he met Guha who could give him a first hand news of the Lord's arrival at this place and offered to guide him in the direction the Lord had gone from there, Bharat's hopes of meeting the Lord soared, and he got swiftness in his strides just like the elephant who suddenly happens to have smelled the presence of water nearby.] (3).

En-route to the forest where Lord Ram lived, Bharat asked all the children of hermits and sages who he met on the way about the direction for Chitrakoot. Tulsidas says that finally when he saw the hills of Chitrakoot, Bharat felt so happy as if a snake has found its lost Mani. [A Mani is a mythical luminescent sac that is said to present on the hood of some serpents. This Mani glows in the dark like the glow-worm. It is believed that a Mani-bearing snake becomes blind if it looses it—hence its close affinity with the Mani. When the lost Mani is found, the snake becomes excessively jubilant.] (4) [2/68]

Praise of Bharat by Triveni, Gods and Bharadwaj: Ram Charit Manas

- (i) भरत बचन सुनि माझ त्रिवेनी । भइ मृदु बानि सुमंगल देनी ॥ 6
तात भरत तुम्ह सब बिधि साधू । राम चरन अनुराग अगाधू ॥ 7
बादि गलानि करहु मन माहीं । तुम्ह सम रामहि कोउ प्रिय नाहीं ॥ 8 [2/205/6-8]
- (ii) दोहा- तनु पुलकेउ हियँ हरषु सुनि बेनि बचन अनुकूल ।
भरत धन्य कहि धन्य सुर हरषित बरषहिँ फूल ॥ [Doha 2/205.]
- (iii) तुम्ह तौ भरत मोर मत एहू । धरें देह जनु राम सनेहू ॥ [2/208/8]
भरत धन्य तुम्ह जसु जगु जयऊ । कहि अस पेम मगन मुनि भयऊ ॥ [2/210/6]
- (i) Bharat followed the same route taken by Lord Ram earlier. So he reached Triveni (Prayag, the present-day city of Allahabad) and bathed in the confluence of the three holy rivers. He requested the holy 'Triveni' to bless him so that he can have eternal devotion for Lord Ram. Hearing his earnest prayers, Triveni spoke in a sweet and pleasant voice, blessing him and praising him by saying—'Dear Bharat! you are pious and innocent in every way, and your love for Lord Ram's holy feet is infinite and fathomless. Don't have any remorse because there is no one as much dear to Lord Ram as yourself. The Lord lives you more than you can imagine. He has no ill-will against you.' (2/205/6-8).
- (ii) When Bharat heard Triveni endorsing his love and devotion for the Lord, he was extremely pleased, thrilled and exhilarated. After praise by Triveni, even the Gods were extolling the virtues of Bharat when they said—'Bharat indeed is all

praiseworthy; glory to him!'. Saying this, they showered flowers over him (from the heavens) (2/205).

- (iii) The third praise came from sage Bharadwaj when he said—'In my opinion, you are the very incarnation, as it were, of Lord Ram's love.' (2/208/8). The sage further said—'Bharat, you deserve all the praises because your glory has conquered the whole world.' (2/210/6)

Arrival of Bharat at Chitrakoot, and Lord Ram-Bharat meeting: Ram Charit Manas

इहाँ भरतु सब सहित सहाए । मंदाकिनी पुनीत नहाए ॥ [2/233/4]
 सेवक बचन सत्य सब जाने । आश्रम निकट जाइ निअराने ॥ 1
 भरत दीख बन सैल समाजू । मुदित छुधित जनु पाइ सुनाजू ॥ 2 [2/235/1-2]
 दोहा- राम सैल सोभा निरखि भरत हृदयँ अति पेमु ।
 तापस तप फलु पाइ जिमि सुखी सिरानें नेमु ॥ [Doha 2/236]
 तब केवट ऊँचे चढ़ि धाई । कहेउ भरत सन भुजा उठाई ॥ 1
 नाथ देखिअहिं बिटप बिसाला । पाकरि जंबु रसाल तमाला ॥ 2
 जिन्ह तरुबरन्ह मध्य बटु सोहा । मंजु बिसाल देखि मनु मोहा ॥ 3
 ए तरु सरित समीप गोसाँई । रघुबर परनकुटी जहाँ छाई ॥ 6 [2/237/1-3, 6]
 भरत दीख प्रभु आश्रमु पावन । सकल सुमंगल सदन सुहावन ॥ 2
 करत प्रबेस मिटे दुख दावा । जनु जोगी परमारथु पावा ॥ 3 [2/239/2-3]
 कहत सप्रेम नाइ महि माथा । भरत प्रनाम करत रघुनाथा ॥ 7
 उठे राम सुनि पेम अधीरा । कहूँ पट कहूँ निषंग धनु तीरा ॥ 8 [2/240/7-8]
 दोहा- बरबस लिए उठाइ उर लाए कृपानिधान ।
 भरत राम की मिलनि लखि बिसरे सबहि अपान ॥ [Doha 2/240]

Reaching the vicinity of Chitrakoot, Bharat bathed in the holy river Mandakini along with all those who had accompanied him (2/233/4). Then Nishad (Guha—the chieftain of Sring-ber-pur) was sent to scout around. Upon hearing his pleasant words (that good omens indicate success), Bharat proceeded further ahead and drew near Lord Ram's hermitage (1). When he saw the surrounding hills and the woods, he felt as happy as a hungry man at the sight of food (2) [2/235/1-2]. Bharat was overwhelmed with love at the sight of Lord Ram's hill (where Ram resided) even as an ascetic rejoices on the completion of his penance and reaping the fruit of it (Doha 2/236).

Meanwhile, the chieftain Nishad ran up a small hillock and exclaimed to Bharat with raised arms, 'My Lord! I can see huge Pakar trees (an Indian fig tree), Jambu Tree (black plum), Mango tree and Tamal tree (black catechu), in the midst of which is a big Banyan tree which is large and most charming (1-3). These trees stand close to a riverside where I can see Lord Ram's hut made of twigs, leaves and bamboo (6) [2/237/1-3,6].

Bharat approached and moved in that direction to see for himself the holy and lovely hermitage of his Lord Ram, which was the abode of all well-being and blessings (i.e. it was very auspicious and holy to look at) (2). As he entered the hermitage compound, all

his woes disappeared as if a mystic or an ascetic has realised the Supreme Truth (3) [2/239/2-3].

Laxman first sighted Bharat entering the hermitage, and he rushed to inform Lord Ram that Bharat is paying his respects (7). As soon as Lord Ram heard these words, he rose from his seat quickly, so overwhelmed with joy was he that his hermit-like robes dropped in one direction while the bow and the quiver fell in another direction (8). He then forcefully lifted a prostrated Bharat and embraced him most affectionately. Everyone who witnessed the sight of Lord Ram's meeting with Bharat lost self-consciousness (i.e. they were all spellbound and enthralled by this wonderful spectacle) [Chaupai lines 2/240/7-8, Doha 240].

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 2/69—

बिलोके दूरितें दोड बीर ।
 उर आयत, आजानु सुभग भुज, स्यामल-गौर शरीर ।।1
 सीस जटा, सरसीरुह लोचन, बने परिधन मुनिचीर ।
 निकट निषंग, संग सिय सोभित, करनि धुनत धनु-तीर ।।2
 मन अगहुँड़, तनु पुलक सिथिल भयो, नलिन नयन भरे नीर ।
 गड़त गोड़ मानो सकुच-पंक महँ, कढ़त प्रेम-बल धीर ।।3
 तुलसिदास दसा देखि भरतकी उठि धाए अतिहि अधीर ।
 लिये उठाइ उर लाइ कृपानिधि बिरह-जनित हरि पीर ।।4 [2/69]

Verse no. 2/69—At the hermitage, Bharat saw the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman from a distance. [Now, the narration is in the present tense to indicate what Bharat sees—] The two brothers are characterised by broad chests and knee-long arms, and they have a dark and a wheatish complexion (of Lord Ram and Laxman) respectively (1). They have matted hairs, lotus-like eyes, and are attired as a hermit. The quiver is placed near their seats, Sita looks most adorable next to them, and they are playfully holding the bow and arrow (2). Bharat's mind was eager to rush forward towards the Lord, but his body was overwhelmed with excitement and it became immobile out of shock and awe, as it were, and tears welled-up in his eyes. His legs refused to move and they appeared to sink in quick-sand, and he had to pull them out courageously by force of love to move forward. [In brief, the sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman dazed Bharat so much that his legs became stiff with emotions and refused to move. So overwhelmed was he at the sight of the Lord that he became completely immobile for some time.] (3).

Tulsidas says that when Lord Ram saw Bharat's condition, he himself stood up instantly, with love overflowing and drowning him also as he ran towards Bharat, lifted him forcefully from the ground where he (Bharat) had been lying prostrate, and then embraced him most affectionately, thereby removing all the sorrows and woes as well as doubts and consternations that had been tormenting Bharat for so long (4). [2/69].

{After sometime when Bharat and his party had rested, a meeting was called to decide the future course of action. Now let's see what happened at this meeting.}

The Conference at Chitrakoot: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- गुर पद कमल प्रनामु करि बैठे आयसु पाइ ।
 बिप्र महाजन सचिव सब जुरे सभासद आइ ॥ [2/253]
 सब कहँ सुखद राम अभिषेकू । मंगल मोद मूल मग एकू ॥1
 केहि बिधि अवध चलहिं रघुराऊ । कहहु समुझि सोइ करिअ उपाऊ ॥2 [2/255/1-2]
 कहहिं भरतु मुनि कहा सो कीन्हे । फलु जग जीवन्ह अभिमत दीन्हे ॥7
 कानन करउँ जनम भरि बासू । एहिं तें अधिक न मोर सुपासू ॥8 [2 / 256 / 7-8]
 हृदयँ हेरि हारेउँ सब ओरा । एकहि भाँति भलेहिं भल मोरा ॥ [2 / 261 / 7]
 स्वारथु नाथ फिरें सबही का । किऐँ रजाइ कोटि बिधि नीका ॥ 5
 यह स्वारथ परमारथ सारू । सकल सुकृत फल सुगति सिंगारू ॥6
 देव एक बिनती सुनि मोरी । उचित होइ तस करब बहोरी ॥7
 तिलक समाजु साजि सबु आना । करिअ सुफल प्रभु जौं मनु माना ॥8 [2/268/5-8]
 दोहा- प्रभु प्रसन्न मन सकुच तजि जो जेहि आयसु देब ।
 सो सिर धरि धरि करिहि सबु मिटिहि अनट अवरैब ॥ [Doha 2/269.]

The conference began at Chitrakoot. Bharat sat down along with other council members, the Brahmins, elite of the city, ministers, and of course the royal preacher sage Vashistha who presided over the meeting (2/253). He asked the councillors, 'Lord Ram's coronation shall be most welcome, pleasing and delightful for all of us. That is the only way which is desired by all of us, and it is conducive to good luck and source of all joys for us. In what way this can be done and the goal actually achieved, I can't figure out. So please ponder over the matter and tell me the next course of action.' [2/255/1-2].

Bharat stood up and made the following submission—'By obeying one's Guru's command, one would attain the fruit of gratifying all in this world (7). I am ready to stay in the forest for the rest of my life (if that would suffice to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya)—I don't conceive of or visualize of any other happiness which is greater than this (8) [2/256/7-8]. I have surveyed all possible avenues to overcome my predicament, and feel frustrated. There is only one way for my salvation, and it is that Lord Ram returns to Ayodhya and I be allowed to replace him in the forest to live out the exile period of fourteen years as commanded by the father or by the destiny.' [2/261/7].

Then addressing Lord Ram he says, 'My Lord, if you return back to Ayodhya, everyone will be a gainer (it would be in the interest of all). On the contrary, if we obey your orders, we shall gain in millions of ways. [Bharat seemed to say—'Oh Lord, instead of my imposing my wish upon you, it would be much better if I obey your orders—so you already know why I've come, now the ball's in your court. I have come to send you back to Ayodhya, and if you say that the father's instructions of fourteen years of forest exile must be obeyed, then I am ready to do it on your behalf. After all, would you not agree that there is no difference between you and me? Is it not true that you love me

more than you love even your own self? Well then, this is my hidden wish; it is my sincere desire. So, say, would you not pay any heed to it; would you like to hurt the same Bharat whom you forced to win in a game even though you were the real winner because you did not want Bharat to feel sad at losing the game?'] (5).

Obedience to you is the best gain materially and spiritually; it is the result of all good and noble acts and the ornament of (best of) all destinies (6). However, my lord, still I make a humble prayer, please listen to it and then (we shall) decide whatever is appropriate (7). I have brought along with me all the requisites for your coronation here in the forest itself. If you please (deem fit), kindly put them to good use (i.e. be crowned). Oblige all of us, and especially me (8). [2/268/5-8].

Each and every one of us assembled here will respectfully and reverentially carryout all the orders you please to give, with cheerful heart and without reservations. And since the decision will be yours and orders come from you, all the imbroglio and injustice will come to an end. There would be no further debate.' [Doha 2/269.]

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/70—

भरत भए ठाढ़े कर जोरि।
 है न सकत सामुहें सकुचबस समुझि मातुकृत खोरि॥ 1॥
 फिरिहैं किधौं फिरन कहिहैं प्रभु कलपि कुटिलता मोरि।
 हृदय सोच, जलभरे बिलोचन, नेह देह भइ भोरि॥ 2॥
 बनबासी, पुरलोग, महामुनि किए हैं काठके—से कोरि।
 दै दै श्रवन सुनिबेको जहँ तहँ रहे प्रेम मन बोरि॥ 3॥
 तुलसी राम—सुभाव सुमिरि, उर धरि धीरजहि बहोरि।
 बोले बचन बिनीत उचित हित करुना—रसहि निचोरि॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/70—Then Bharat stood up with folded hands and palms joining each other as a token of submission and humble request. Recognizing the misdeeds, misdemeanours and malfeasance of his mother, he was too hesitant and reluctant to stand before the Lord (Sri Ram) (1).

His eyes were full of tears, the body was numbed by emotions of affection, and he was mentally in a dilemma and in a state of flux, wondering whether the Lord will come back (to Ayodhya) or will he tell him to go back considering his wicked deeds, misdemeanours and malfeasance. [Bharat was uncertain how the Lord would react to his pleadings and requests to go back to Ayodhya. He doubted whether the Lord would take him seriously, or he might take him to be clever and crafty in attempting to hide his real intentions behind the guise of showing love. The Lord might deduce that Bharat is attempting to appease him just to avoid infamy and revolt in the kingdom, but internally he wishes that the Lord remain in the forest. Perhaps this is why Bharat says that 'we will all obey your orders'—because he knows that the Lord would refuse to go back. So when the Lord refuses to rescind his decision to stay on in the forest, Bharat would at least have an excuse to ascend the throne because now everyone would stand a witness to vouch for Bharat that he did request the Lord to come back but the Lord himself refused, so what can Bharat do.] (2).

The forest dwellers, citizens (of Ayodhya) and the great sages and hermits appear to be cast in wood (i.e. are immobile and in a great dilemma), and they are standing at random everywhere with their mind and heart soaked in love and affection, to hear what is being said (at the meeting) (3).

Tulsidas says that at this opportune moment, Bharat recalled the merciful temperament, the kind, benevolent and gracious nature of Sri Ram, gathered courage in his heart, and spoke words which were humble, prayerful, full of pity, tenderness of feelings, beneficial and appropriate for the occasion (4)."

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/71—

जानत हौ सबहीके मनकी ।
तदपि, कृपालु ! करौं बिनती सोइ सादर सुनहु दीन-हित जनकी ॥1
ए सेवक संतत अनन्य अति, ज्यों चातकहि एक गति घनकी ।
यह बिचारि गवनहु पुनीत पुर, हरहु दुसह आरति परिजन की ॥ 2
मेरो जीवन जानिय ऐसोइ, जियै जैसो अहि, जासु गई मनि फन की ।
मेटहु कुलकलंक कोसलपति, आग्या देहु नाथ मोहि बनकी ॥3
मोको जोइ लाइय लागै सोइ, उतपति है कुमातुतें तनकी ।
तुलसिदास सब दोष दूर करि प्रभु अब लाज करहु निज पनकी ॥4 [2/71]

Verse no. 2/71—Bharat said, 'Oh merciful and compassionate Lord! Though you know what is in everybody's mind, I still make a humble submission. You are the benefactor of the distressed, so please listen to me (1). These citizens of Ayodhya have always been your faithful subjects; even as the bird called 'Papiha' has the cloud as its saviour (i.e. this bird is constantly dependent on the rain drop for survival), you should also return to Ayodhya and be the saviour of its citizens (2). Consider my life like a Mani-bearing snake that is forced to live without it. [Mani is a sac like structure on the hood of a special and rare species of serpents, and it glows in the dark; it is a legend that if that sac is stolen, the serpent dies. That is, I simply cannot live without you.].

Oh Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya)! Please remove the ignobility of the younger brother getting the crown while the eldest is still alive. Therefore, accept the crown of Ayodhya and let me go to the forest instead (3). And since I am born of a dishonourable mother, any blame can be put on my head. But oh Lord, you should (being merciful) forgive me for my commissions and omissions (sins) and keep your fame alive (that you are an ocean of forgiveness, compassion and mercy) (4) (2/71)."

Ram's reply: Ram Charit Manas

सहित समाज तुम्हार हमारा । घर बन गुर प्रसाद रखवारा ॥1
मातु पिता गुर स्वामि निदेसू । सकल धरम धरनीधर सेसू ॥2
सो तुम्ह करहु करावहु मोहू । तात तरनिकुल पालक होहू ॥3

साधक एक सकल सिधि देनी । कीरति सुगति भूतिमय बेनी ॥4
 सो बिचारि सहि संकटु भारी । करहु प्रजा परिवार सुखारी ॥5
 बाँटी बिपति सबहिं मोहि भाई । तुम्हहिं अवधि भरि बड़ि कठिनाई ॥6 [2/306/1-6]

Bharat's rejoinder: Ram Charit Manas

भरतहि भयउ परम संतोषू । सनमुख स्वामि बिमुख दुख दोषू ॥3
 नाथ भयउ सुखु साथ गए को । लहेउँ लाहु जग जनमु भए को ॥6
 अब कृपाल जस आयसु होई । करौं सीस धरि सादर सोई ॥7
 सो अवलंब देव मोहि देई । अवधि पारु पावौं जेहि सेई ॥8 [2/307/3, 6-8]

Seeing the plight of all, hearing what Bharat said, and knowing what actually was in his mind and heart, Ram spoke these words which were most appropriate for the occasion, time and circumstance—‘Dear Bharat, (this is my advice). Whether at home or in the forest, the goodwill of our teacher (Vashistha), obedience and blessing of our elders and parents are the props (supports) of all virtues even as Sheshnath (God of serpents) supports the earth on his hood (1-2). Therefore, you should obey their command and also help me to do the same, because by doing so, you would be the saviour of the honour of our race (3), and it is the bestower of all achievements and successes even as the triple rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati combine the virtues of fame, salvation and prosperity (at their junction at Prayag) (4). Consider this, and hence, even while enduring a lot of hardship and agony, you should make the subjects (the people of Ayodhya) happy (5). My troubles have been shared by us all, but I do realise that your's will be the toughest for the period of fourteen years of my exile (6).’ [In essence, Lord Ram advised Bharat to bear with him for 14 years as this was the right path to follow]. [2/306/1-6].

Hearing Lord Ram's advice, the dilemma of Bharat ended because now he had got direct, clear instructions from Lord Ram about what to do. He derived immense consolation from Lord Ram's soothing words. Now that his master (Lord) was in front of him, all his woes and sorrows vanished (3).

Bharat replied, ‘I have derived the joy of having accompanied you to the forest, as well as being born in this world as your brother (because now you have thought me worthy to be your partner in sharing your grief). [Happy times will surely come, but where will someone get an opportunity to share your grief? A friend in need is a friend indeed, so surely I'm very lucky that I would be sharing your hard times with you.] (6).

Now, my Lord, whatever is your command I will carry it out faithfully and with greatest of obedience and reverence (7). Please give me some token of support, relying upon which I can tide over this period of fourteen years of exile (8).’ [2/307/3, 6-8].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/72—

तात ! बिचारो धौं, हौं क्यों आवौं ।
 तुम्ह सुचि, सुहृद, सुजान सकल बिधि, बहुत कहा कहि कहि समुझावौं ॥ 1 ॥
 निज कर खाल खैंचि या तनुतें जौ पितु पग पानही करावौं ।

होउँ न उरिन पिता दसरथतें, कैसे ताके बचन मेटि पति पावौं ॥ 2 ॥
 तुलसिदास जाको सुजस तिहूँ पुर, क्यों तेहि कुलहि कालिमा लावौं ।
 प्रभु-रुख निरखि निरास भरत भए, जान्यो है सबहि भाँति बिधि बावौं ॥ 3 ॥

Verse no. 2/72—[Sri Ram replied—] ‘Brother, just think how can I return? You are faultless, most dear and wise. [Why are you feeling so contrite, remorseful and guilty?] What more can I tell to explain things to you (for, you are wise enough to think for yourself)? (1).

Even if I shear my skin with my own hands and use it to make footwear (shoes) for my father's feet, I still would not be able to overcome his obligations (literally, repay his debts) as a son. Then, how can I be righteous and noble by neglecting or going against his words or orders? (2).’

Tulsidas says that the Lord (Sri Ram) continued, ‘How can I cause ignominy to a clan which is famed and glorious in the three Lokas (worlds)?’ Bharat lost all hopes (and was crestfallen) and he regarded the creator (Vidhi) fully opposed, malignant and full of malice (3).

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/73—

बहुरो भरत कह्यो कछु चाहैं ।
 सकुच-सिंधु बोहित बिबेक करि बुधि-बल बचन निबाहैं ॥ 1 ॥
 छोटीहुतें छोह करि आए, मैं सामुहैं न हेरो ।
 एकहि बार आजु बिधि मेरो सील-सनेह निबेरो ॥ 2 ॥
 तुलसी जो फिरिबो न बनै, प्रभु ! तौ हौं आयसु पावौं ।
 घर फेरि लषन, लरिका हैं, नाथ साथ हौं आवौं ॥ 3 ॥

Verse no. 2/73—Bharat wanted to say something; he wishes to make a boat out of wisdom in the ocean of hesitation and reluctance (to speak or answer back to Sri Ram), and putting the travellers represented by words in it, he wants to take them across on the strength of the boatman who is likened to his intellect (1).

He begins to say, ‘Since our childhood, the Lord (Sri Ram) has been always affectionate and most affable towards me, and I too never stood in front and looked you in your face (i.e., never looked you in your eyes because I respected you so much that I kept myself on your sideways and always stood with bowed head before you). But the creator has for once removed my courteousness, affectionate, submissive and docile nature today. (Hence, I have gathered enough courage and audacity to defy your honour and your referential presence, and speak on your face) (2).

All right, if it is not possible for you to return home, then Oh Lord, give me the order so that I might accompany you while Laxman, being younger than me and still a child, should return home (3).’

The final command from Lord Ram: Ram Charit Manas

भोर न्हाइ सबु जुरा समाजू । भरत भूमिसुर तेरहुति राजू ॥ 1
अब गोसाईं मोहि देउ रजाई । सेवौ अवध अवधि भरि जाई ॥ 8 [2/313/1,8]
दोहा- जेहि उपाय पुनि पाय जनु देखै दीनदयाल ।
सो सिख देइअ अवधि लागि कोसलपाल कृपाल ॥ [Doha 2/313]
प्रभु करि कृपा पाँवरी दीन्हैं । सादर भरत सीस धरि लीन्हैं ॥ [2/316/4]

When the confabulations/discussions ended, the people dispersed for the day. The next morning, the whole company assembled once again for a final decision (1). Bharat said, 'Now, My Lord, (as per your desire) please give me permission so that I can go and serve Ayodhya for the period of your exile (8). Oh merciful Lord! Give (tell) me some means by the help of which I can pass this period of 14 years (of your exile) and live to see your (holy) feet once again [Chaupai lines 2/313/1,8, Doha 313]."

Lord Ram was overwhelmed with love, compassion and affection for Bharat and consoled him in many ways. And, seeing that Bharat was very devoted to his holy feet, he finally decided to give his own wooden sandals to Bharat as a token of his own presence; Bharat accepted them most reverentially and placed them on his head [2/316/4].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/75—

काहेको मानत हानि हिये हौ ?
प्रीति-नीति-गुन-सील-धरम कहँ तुम अवलंब दिये हौ ॥ 1
तात ! जात जानिबे न ए दिन, करि प्रमान पितु-बानी ।
ऐहौं बेगि, धरहु धीरज उर कठिन कालगति जानी ॥ 2
तुलसिदास अनुजहिं प्रबोधि प्रभु चरनपीठ निज दीन्हें ।
मनहु सबनि के प्रान-पाहरू भरत सीस धरि लीन्हें ॥ 3 [2/75]

Verse no. 2/75—Lord Ram said—'Brother, why are you so remorseful? You have supported (followed) the path of righteousness, established rules, virtues, good deeds and noble conduct (1). Oh Dear! These days of sorrow and misfortune will fly away soon; I will complete our father's vows and return immediately. Please have courage and forbearance considering the time and occasion. Please bear with me for some more time, then everything will be alright (2).'

Tulsidas says, thus consoling his brother, Lord Ram gave his wooden sandals to him, and Bharat accepted those sandals with due reverence on his head, considering them to be the guard of his soul (as a Guard to prevent his soul departing from his body (3). [2/75]

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/76—

बिनती भरत करत कर जोरे।
 दीनबंधु ! दीनता दीनकी कबहुँ परै जनि भोरे॥ 1॥
 तुम्हसे तुम्हहि नाथ मोको, मोसे जन तुमको बहुतेरे।
 इहै जानि, पहिचानि प्रीति, छमिए अघ-औगुन मेरे॥ 2॥
 यों कहि सीय-राम-पाँयनि परि लषन लाइ उर लीन्हें।
 पुलक सरीर, नीर भरि लोचन, कहत प्रेम-पन-कीन्हें॥ 3॥
 तुलसी बीते अवधि प्रथम दिन जो रघुबीर न ऐहौ।
 तौ प्रभु-चरन-सरोज-सपथ जीवत परिजनहि न पैहौ॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/76—Bharat prays with folded hands, ‘Oh the friend of the distressed and lowly! Let not the humbleness, simplicity and submission of this humble (servant of your's) ever be lost or go astray. [Bharat asks Sri Ram to bless him so that when he returns to Ayodhya and assumes charge of the kingdom as a regent for the period of Sri Ram's exile, the arrogance, pomp and pageantry, the taste and pelf of power should not go into his head, as it were, and make him haughty and arrogant, making him forget his humbleness and petty standing. These weaknesses in human character are the various errors, the follies and pitfalls to which Bharat is referring to when he says that ‘he should not go astray’.] (1).

Oh Lord! For me, you are the only Lord that I know of, but for you there are many servants like me. Realising and considering these factors, and recognising my inherent and internal sincere affection for you, please forgive my faults, shortcomings, misdemeanours and sins (2).’

Saying this, Bharat fell at the feet of Lord Ram and Sita, embraced Laxman, and then began to say with an emotionally overwhelmed and thrilled body that had its eyes full of tears (3).

[Bharat made this solemn vow—] ‘Oh Raghubir (Sri Ram)! If you do not come back on the very first day immediately following the expiry of the last day of your exile (i.e., the 1st day after the 14th year end), then I swear by your lotus-feet that you will not find this servant of your's alive! (4).’

Departure of Bharat from Chitrakoot for Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- मागेउ बिदा प्रनामु करि राम लिए उर लाइ ।
 लोग उचाटे अमरपति कुटिल कुअवसरु पाइ ॥ [2/316]
 तन मन बचन उमग अनुरागा । धीर धुरंधर धीरजु त्यागा ॥ 5
 बारिज लोचन मोचत बारी । देखि दसा सुर सभा दुखारी ॥ 6 [2/317/5-6]
 साजि बाजि गज बाहन नाना । भरत भूप दल कीन्ह पयाना ॥ 6
 हृदयँ रामु सिय लखन समेता । चले जाहिं सब लोग अचेता ॥ 7 [2/320/6-7]

Bharat payed his obeisance and begged leave of Lord Ram, whereupon Lord Ram clasped Bharat to his bosom. The malevolent Gods (who had earlier conspired and sent

Saraswati to corrupt the wisdom of Manthra, the maid of Kaikeyi so that Lord Ram could go to the forest) created a situation whereby the people became weary. [The Gods created a situation whereby the people became tired of the hardships of forest life as well as were convinced that it is futile to expect any positive outcome by pleading with Ram any longer. They became homesick and wished to return home at the earliest. The Gods did this to ensure that the spectacle witnessed at the time of Lord Ram's departure from Ayodhya is not repeated and the people refuse to return. They feared a revolt against Bharat's decision to return without Ram, and so the Gods made the people dejected, weary and forlorn.] [2/316]

Lord Ram's body, mind and speech overflowed with love and affection for Bharat, and the Lord who is an embodiment of courage himself lost it (5). Tears of love and grief streamed from his eyes; even the assembled Gods lost composure and wept inconsolably (6) [2/317/5-6]

Equipping horses, elephants and chariots for the home-ward journey, Bharat's party set out for the return to Ayodhya (6). With Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita in their heart, all kept on moving as if in a deep trance (7) [2/320/6-7]

Arrival of Bharat back at Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

प्रभु गुन ग्राम गनत मन माहीं । सब चुपचाप चले मग जाहीं ॥2
जमुना उतरि पार सबु भयऊ । सो बासरु बिनु भोजन गयऊ ॥3
उतरि देवसरि दूसर बासू । रामसखाँ सब कीन्ह सुपासू ॥4
सई उतरि गोमती नहाए । चौथे दिवस अवधपुर आए ॥5 [2/322/2-5]

Always thinking about the glory and virtues of Lord Ram, having their thoughts riveted on the Lord, and his sweet memories evergreen in their hearts and minds, all the people were dazed as they wended their way towards Ayodhya deeply immersed in absolute silence. [The people were extremely sad, contrite, pensive, remorseful and sorrowful. They walked silently, submerged in their own thoughts. They brooded and lamented internally as they walked almost mechanically on the road to Ayodhya. A hidden sense of guilt had overcome Bharat, and more than anyone else he was the most dejected and emotionally affected.] (2).

They crossed the river Yamuna and spent the night halt without food (3). They crossed river Ganges the next day at Sring-ber-pur (and the place was made comfortable for Bharat by the friends of Ram) (4). Crossing the river Sai, and bathing in the river Gomti, the party reached Ayodhya on the 4th day (5) [2/322/2-5].

Bharat's penance at Ayodhya and coronation of Ram's sandal: Ram Charit Manas

सानुज गे गुर गेहँ बहोरी । करि दंडवत कहत कर जोरी ॥6
आयसु होइ त रहैं सनेमा । बोले मुनि तन पुलकि सपेमा ॥7 [2/323/6-7]
दोहा- सुनि सिख पाइ असीस बड़ि गनक बोलि दिनु साधि ।

सिंघासन प्रभु पादुका बैठारे निरुपाधि ।। [Doha 2/323.]
 नंदिगावँ करि परन कुटीरा । कीन्ह निवासु धरम धुर धीरा ।।2
 जटाजूट सिर मुनिपट धारी । महि खनि कुस साँथरी सँवारी ।।3
 असन बसन बासन ब्रत नेमा । करत कठिन रिषिधरम सप्रेमा ।।4 [2/324/2-4]
 दोहा- नित पूजत प्रभु पाँवरी प्रीति न हृदयँ समाति ।
 मागि मागि आयसु करत राज काज बहु भाँति ।। [Doha 2/325]
 लखन राम सिय कानन बसहीं । भरत भवन बसि तप तनु कसहीं ।।2 [2/326/2]

At Ayodhya, Bharat, along with his brother Shatrughan, called on his Guru Vashistha, prostrated in front of him, and submitted with the palms touching each others as they folded their hands (6). Bharat said—‘If I have your permission, I want to live an austere life full of penance.’ The sage’s body was thrilled (7) and he accepted Bharat’s proposal. Having thus received the sage’s permission and blessing, Bharat called astrologers to find out an auspicious day. Then he installed Lord Ram’s sandals on the throne of Ayodhya (2/323/6-7,0)

Thereafter, he got a hut of leaves and twigs erected at a small village called Nandigram (a place about 16-18 Km. away from present day Ayodhya), and made it his residence (2). He matted his hairs in a thick tuft and took on the attire of a hermit, dug the earth in a shallow pit and spread Kusha (a grass) on it (3). Making it his floor, he lived a life of a devout hermit in dress, food, utensils, observances, austerities and thoughts, discarding all ornaments, comforts and pleasures of the sense organs. [Bharat abandoned all the trappings of royalty and kingdom, and lived like a hermit.] (4) [2/324/2-4].

He worshipped Lord Ram’s sandals with his heart overflowing with love and affection; and he disposed of the royal duties taking permission from the sandals each time [Doha 2/325].

While Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita dwelt in the forest, Bharat, even while living in the city, did penance hard enough to mortify his body [2/326/2].

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/79—

जबतें चित्रकूटतें आए ।
 नंदिग्राम खनि अवनि, डासि कुस, परनकुटी करि छाए ।।1
 अजिन बसन, फल असन, जटा धरे रहत अवधि चित दीन्हें ।
 प्रभु-पद-प्रेम-नेम-ब्रत निरखत मुनिन्ह नमित मुख कीन्हें ।।2
 सिंहासनपर पूजि पादुका बारहिं बार जोहारे ।
 प्रभु-अनुराग माँगि आयसु पुरजन सब काज सँवारे ।।3
 तुलसी ज्यों ज्यों घटत तेज तनु, त्यों त्यों प्रीति अधिकाई ।
 भए, न हैं, न होहिंगे कबहुँ भुवन भरत-से भाई ।।4 [2/79]

Verse no. 2/79—Ever since Bharat came from Chitrakoot, he resides in a hut made of leaves and twigs, floor made from dug-out earth covered with Kush grass (1). He is wearing the skin of a deer (as is done by a hermit) instead of the royal robes, has a tuft of matted hair on his head, and has his mind fixed on the exile period (i.e. he is counting

each passing day). Seeing his devotion, love and observances even established hermits are ashamed at their own incompetence (2). Bharat has established (installed) Lord Ram's sandals on the throne of Ayodhya, and carry out all his duties towards the state and its subjects by seeking permission from the sandals (3). Tulsidas says his devotion to Lord Ram increases day by day even as his body is becoming emaciated; in this world, a brother like Bharat has never been, is not, and shall never ever be (4) [2/79]

Geetawali: Verse no. 2/80—

राखी भगति—भलाई भली भाँति भरत ।
 स्वारथ—परमारथ—पथी जय जय जग करत ॥ 1 ॥
 जो ब्रत मुनिवरनि कठिन मानस आचरत ।
 सो ब्रत लिए चातक—ज्यों सुनत पाप हरत ॥ 2 ॥
 सिंहासन सुभग राम—चरन—पीठ धरत ।
 चालत सब राजकाज आयसु अनुसरत ॥ 3 ॥
 आपु अवध, बिपिन बंधु, सोच—जरनि जरत ।
 तुलसी सम—बिषम, सुगम—अगम लिखि न परत ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 2/80—Bharat has proficiently and steadfastly protected the qualities or virtues of that are defined as devotion, dedication and submission to one's Lord. This attitude or the example of Bharat is for the general welfare of all. [He showed by example what devotion, humility and renunciation actually mean and how they can be actually implemented.]

He is a traveller of both the paths leading to serving one's self interest as well as to spiritualism, because he has obtained good fame and respect in the society as well as emancipation and salvation for his soul! The whole world applauds him (1).

The severe austerities, following or pursuing which are difficult even for the mind of hermits and sages, were done (or sustained) by Bharat most ardently and diligently like the bird Chatak (the cuckoo) does, and (which deeds of his are so pure that) by merely remembering (or recalling) them, one can remove all the sins, misdemeanours, unrighteousness and improprieties that might have corrupted him (2).

He has kept Lord Ram's sandals on a pretty throne and carries out the royal duties of the kingdom as per their instructions. [Wooden sandals don't speak. What it signifies is that Bharat always signed his orders on behalf of Sri Ram, merely as a care-taker, but not as a monarch.] (3).

He constantly burns in the heat of ignominy and sorrows of 'you are in Ayodhya while your brother is in the forest'. Tulsidas avers that in this way, both of them—Sri Ram in the forest and Bharat in Ayodhya—are unaware or not affected either by the inconvenience (of the forest) or the convenience (of Ayodhya), the hard and harsh life of the forest or the comfortable and easy life of the city of Ayodhya. [Sri Ram is in the forest but he is very happy there; he does not feel the drudgery and travails of a forest life. Bharat is in a prosperous city, but he lives like a hermit, in great austerities and like a recluse. Besides, he is full of guilt and overcome by sorrows and anguish. So, inspite of living surrounded by all the comforts becoming of a monarch, he leads a harsh life of a

hermit, perhaps harsher than that led by Sri Ram. For, Sri Ram has the pleasant surroundings of Nature—rivers, mountains, flowers, birds, animals, trees, springs and waterfalls etc.—to enjoy and behold, but Bharat is in the captivity which is self imposed. He lives like he was in a jail. That is why the Tapa—severe austerities and penances—of Bharat are superior to those of Sri Ram.] (4).”

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/37—

कैकेयी जौलों जियति रही ।
 तौलों बात मातुसों मुँह भरि भरत न भूलि कही ॥1
 मानी राम अधिक जननी तें, जननिहु गँस न गही ।
 सीय-लषन रिपुदवन राम-रुख लखि सबकी निबही ॥2
 लोक बेद-मरजाद दोष-गुन-गति चित चख न चही ।
 तुलसी भरत समुझि सुनि राखी राम-सनेह सही ॥3 [7/37]

Verse no. 7/37—As long as Kaikeyi lived Bharat did not talk with her even by mistake for the rest of his life (1). But Lord Ram regarded her more respectfully than his own mother, and Kaushalya also did not harbour any ill-will against her. Sita, Laxman and (the youngest brother) Shatrughan also followed Lord Ram (in their attitude towards Kaikeyi) (2). Tulsidas says that for Bharat, Sri Ram's love and devotion was the essence and meaning of his being; he did not bother or pay any heed to the sanctions of the Vedas or customs of the society nor what was good or bad (except love and devotion for Lord Ram) (3). [7/37].

Dohawali: Verse no. 57—

राम प्रेम बिनु दूबरो राम प्रेमहीं पीन ।
 रघुबर कबहुँक करहुगे तुलसिहि ज्यों जल मीन ॥ [57]

A fish remains healthy and survives in water, but becomes emaciated and on verge of death without it; Tulsidas wonders when the same condition would prevail in his heart – when he survives on Ram's love and devotion, but perishes in its absence. [Dohawali verse 57.]

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Chapter 5

Aranya Kand

{The word 'Aranya' means a forest. Hence, this chapter deals with the following events that occurred as Lord Ram passed through the dense forests after leaving Chitrakoot. The main events are the following: crow Jayant's mischief, meeting with sages Atri, Sarbhanga, Sutikshan, Agastya, Sabri and Narad; slaying of demons Viradh, Khar-Dushan-Trishara and Karbandh; abode at Panchvati forest and deformation of Ravana's sister Supernakha, Sita's abduction by Ravana using Marich as a decoy, and the death of Jatau.}

Crow Jayant's mishchief: Ram Charit Manas

सुरपति सुत धरि बायस बेषा । सठ चाहत रघुपति बल देखा ॥5
सीता चरन चोंच हति भागा । मूढ़ मंदमति कारन कागा ॥7
चला रुधिर रघुनायक जाना । सीक धनुष सायक संधाना ॥8 [3/1/5,7-8]
आतुर सभय गहेसि पद जाई । त्राहि त्राहि दयाल रघुराई ॥11
सुनि कृपाल अति आरत बानी । एकनयन करि तजा भवानी ॥14 [3/2/11, 14]

The King of Gods called Indra had a foolish and mischievous son called Jayant. He took the form of a crow to test the might of Lord Ram (5). He bit Sita on the foot and flew away. This he did because he was an utter fool and of low intellect (7). When blood began to ooze from the wound, Lord Ram came to know of it; and he took a shaft of reed (or grass) and used it as an arrow to punish the crow. [Lord Ram did not want to kill but only punish him for his mischief, that's why, instead of using a real-time arrow, he used a grass reed. The Lord knew that he was stupid, and killing him for his nuisance will be too hard a punishment for an ill-witted creature who does not even know what stupidity he is up to.] (8) [3/1/5,7-8].

Jayant ran from place to place in fear trying to escape from the pursuing arrow, but no one gave him refuge against Lord Ram's wrath. At last, bewildered and terrified, he went back to Lord Ram's feet asking him to show mercy (11). The merciful Lord, on hearing his appeal full of pity, excused him, but instead of a severe punishment, and also since his arrow could not go in vain, he punctured one of his eyes. [Legend has it that this is the reason why crows are supposed to see with only one eye.] (14) [3/2/11,14].

Departure from Chitrakoot: Ram Charit Manas

रघुपति चित्रकूट बसि नाना । चरित किए श्रुति सुधा समाना ॥1॥
सकल मुनिन्ह सन बिदा कराई । सीता सहित चले द्वौ भाई ॥3 [3/3/1, 3]

While living at Chitrakoot, Lord Ram did many kind deeds which are as sweet as nectar for the ear (1). When the time came, he took leave of all the hermits and sages living there, and the two brothers departed from Chitrakoot along with Sita for their onward journey. (3) [3/1,3].

{News arrived in Ayodhya about the Lord's departure from Chitrakoot and his onwards journey. Obviously, once the Lord was located at Chitrakoot, some of the spies of the kingdom of Ayodhya must have been ordered by senior ministers who accompanied Bharat to keep an eye on the Lord's whereabouts once the main party returned. This selected group of men used to keep Bharat and others informed about the Lord's news, though later on they lost track perhaps because the all-knowing Lord knew about them and he surreptitiously walked away in the dead of night one day as he did not want to be followed by anyone. The other reason why they lost track may be was that when the Lord entered the dense forest infested by fierce demons and ogres, the spies were terrified to follow him, and they decided to give up.}

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 2/88—

काहूँसों काहूँ समाचार ऐसे पाए ।
चित्रकूटतें राम—लषन—सिय सुनियत अनत सिधाए ॥ 1 ॥
सैल, सरित, निरझर, बन, मुनि—थल देखि—देखि सब आए ।
कहत सुनत सुमिरत सुखदायक, मानस—सुगम सुहाए ॥ 2 ॥
बड़ि अवलंब बाम—बिधि—बिघटित बिषम बिषाद बढ़ाए ।
सिरिस—सुमन—सुकुमार मनोहर बालक बिंध्य चढ़ाए ॥ 3 ॥
अवध सकल नर—नारि बिकल अति, अँकनि बचन अनभाए ।
तुलसी राम—बियोग—सोग—बस, समुझत नहिं समुझाए ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no.2/88—Someone has heard from someone else that Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita have left Chitrakoot and gone further somewhere else—this is what is heard by way of news spread by word of mouth (1).

They (i.e. those travellers who brought the news) said that they had seen the mountains, rivers, waterfalls, forests and hermitages of sages and hermits. [This was said to prove that the travellers had actually been to the place.] All these things are pleasant to hear as well as soothing for the troubled minds and hearts of the citizens of Ayodhya. [The news that the travellers brought offered a soothing balm to alleviate the sufferings of the people of Ayodhya who were burning in the fire of separation from their beloved Lord. They eagerly crowded around the messengers to hear the gratifying news.] (2).

At this news, some other citizens observed, 'The malignant and malicious creator (who is opposed to us) has earlier dashed our hopes (that Lord Ram would be anointed a

king), and instead has now increased our sorrows and despairs severely by sending the pretty children (Ram, Laxman, Sita)—who are as tender, gentle and pleasant as the flowers of the Shesham tree—to the mountains of Vindhyachal. [the citizen laments that the malicious creator is out to wreak vengeance on them and has decided to afflict more suffering on Lord Ram and his tender wife Sita and his young brother Laxman by not allowing them peace by letting them stay in the pleasant environs of Chitrakoot, but forcing them to move ahead and into the harsh environs of the Vindhyachal mountains.] (3).'

Hearing these unpleasant words (which were full of bitterness, contrition and remorse) all the inhabitants of Ayodhya, men and women, became exceedingly agitated and uneasy. Tulsidas says that no matter how much one tried to console them and tried to reason with them, they were inconsolable, unconvinced and remorseful due to being overcome by the pain and agonies of separation from Sri Ram (4)."

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 2/89—

सुनि मैं सखि ! मंगल चाह सुहाई।
 सुभ पत्रिका निषादराजकी आजु भरत पहुँ आई॥ 1॥
 कुँवर सो कुसल-छेम अलि ! तेहि पल कुलगुर कहँ पहुँचाई।
 गुर कृपालु संभ्रम पुर घर घर सादर सबहि सुनाई॥ 2॥
 बधि बिराध, सुर-साधु सुखी करि, ऋषि-सिख-आसिष पाई।
 कुंभजु-सिष्य समेत संग सिय, मुदित चले दोउ भाई॥ 3॥
 बीच बिंध्य रेवा सुपास थल बसे हैं परन-गृह छाई।
 पंथ-कथा रघुनाथ पथिककी तुलसिदास सुनि गाई॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/89—[A woman of Ayodhya is excitedly telling her friend—] 'Oh Friend! I have heard auspicious good news. Today, an auspicious letter (containing happy tidings) has come to Bharat from the king of the boatman community by the name of Nishad (1).

Oh Friend! That letter containing news of the welfare and well-being of Lord Ram was sent by the prince (Bharat) immediately to his Guru (Vashishtha), and thereafter, the gracious Guru had it read out to each household of the city with great joy and with due honour. [When the good news of the Lord's well-being arrived by means of a letter sent by Nishad, the Guru summoned royal heralds and asked them to go to the city and read it out at public places so that the citizens can learn about the Lord's welfare in the forest.] (2).

(It is written in it that—) Both the brothers (Sri Ram and Laxman), having slayed the (demon) Viradh, making the Gods and saintly people happy and delighted, and after having received the blessings, advice and (spiritual and moral) guidance from the sages residing in the forest, have gone further ahead to some other forest. The brothers are accompanied by Sita as well as by sage Sutikshan who is a disciple of sage Agastya. [Sutikshan has been allowed by the Lord to accompany him so that the former can show the Lord the path leading to the hermitage of sage Agastya.] (3).

At the present time, they are residing at a convenient place between Vindhyachal and the river Rewa (Narmada) by erecting a cottage of leaves.' Tulsidas has also sung

this story of Sri Ram as a mendicant traveller as he has heard it and learnt about it from his own Guru and the Purans (ancient histories of the Hindus). (4).”

[Note—In all the earlier verses, right from the Lord’s birth through all the events that led the Lord to reach Chitrakoot and stay there, Tulsidas’ description of Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita has been written in the first person narrative as if Tulsidas was personally present on all these occasions. But now he has changed the mode of narration to the second and the third person narrative. It indicates that mentally Tulsidas had accompanied Lord Ram ever since the Lord’s birth, but has returned to Ayodhya with Bharat when the latter came back with the Lord’s wooden sandals and had enthroned them on the seat of power at Ayodhya. By extension, this also establishes that Tulsidas’ heart is where Sri Ram’s lotus-like holy feet are, and he has such great empathy for Bharat that like the latter he prefers to stay mentally at Ayodhya with Bharat and worship the symbol of Lord’s holy presence in the form of his footwear (sandals). In umpteen number of verses of Vinai-Patrika, Tulsidas has emphasised this point that more than Lord Ram himself, it is the Lord’s holy feet and holy name which are of greater importance for him from the perspective of spiritualism and attainment of emancipation and salvation. Devotion for the Lord, submission to him, yearning for him and his divine love, and remaining submerged in his thoughts is easier when one is away from the physical presence of the Lord rather than when one is near him. Bharat is an epitome of Bhakti—which is total devotion and surrender for the Lord. He is constantly chanting Sri Ram’s holy name and worshipping his sandals—both activities that are very dear to Tulsidas also. So, the poet has decided to return to Ayodhya with Bharat, and to follow his example of devotion and worship rather than continue with the onward journey with Sri Ram.

The last stanza of verse no. 2/89 of Geetawali is ample proof of it because now Tulsidas narrates the story ‘as he has heard and learnt about it from his Guru and Purans etc.’ instead of ‘as he has witnessed it personally’ which was the way he had been narrating all the previous events till now.]

Lord Ram Meeting sage Atri: Ram Charit Manas

अत्रि के आश्रम जब प्रभु गयऊ । सुनत महामुनि हरषित भयऊ ॥ 14
पुलकित गात अत्रि उठि धाए । देखि रामु आतुर चलि आए ॥ 15
करत दंडवत मुनि उर लाए । प्रेम बारि द्वौ जन अन्हवाए ॥ 16 [3/3/4-6]

Proceeding from Chitrakoot, Lord Ram arrived at the great sage Atri’s ashram (hermitage). On hearing the news of Lord Ram’s arrival, Atri was thrilled (4). He rushed to meet Lord Ram; and seeing Atri so overwhelmed with joy, Ram too rushed forward to meet the sage half-way (5). Sri Ram and Laxman prostrated themselves before the sage (as a mark of respect), and the sage lifted them both and clasped them to his bosom, bathing them in tears of love and joy (6) [3/3/4-6].

Meeting of Sita and Anusuiya: Ram Charit Manas

अनुसुइया के पद गहि सीता । मिली बहोरि सुसील बिनीता ॥1
रिषिपतिनी मन सुख अधिकाई । आसिष देइ निकट बैठाई ॥2 [3/5/1-2]

Sage Atri had a wife called Anusuiya. Sita, who was so immaculate, good natured and modest, went to meet her and touched her feet (1). The sage's wife felt overjoyed in her heart; she blessed Sita and seated her beside herself (2) [3/5/1-2].

Departure from Atri's hermitage: Ram Charit Manas

तब मुनि सन कह कृपानिधाना । आयसु होइ जाउँ बन आना ॥ [3/6/2]
मुनि पद कमल नाइ करि सीसा । चले बनहि सुर नर मुनि ईसा ॥ [3/7/1]

Then the merciful Lord Sri Ram said to the sage, 'Lord! Give me permission to go to some other forest.' [3/6/2]. He then bowed his head at the sage's feet, and proceeded to the (next) forest [3/7/1].

Slaying of the demon Viradh: Ram Charit Manas

मिला असुर बिराध मग जाता । आवतहीं रघुबीर निपाता ॥6
तुरतहिं रुचिर रूप तेहिं पावा । देखि दुखी निज धाम पठावा ॥7 [3/7/6-7]

While on their way in the forest, the trio (Ram, Laxman, Sita) met the demon Viradh (pronounced as Viraadh); and Lord Ram slayed him as soon as he made his appearance (6). Being thus slayed, he assumed a divine form immediately. Seeing that Viradh was very distressed, Lord Sri Ram sent him to his own abode (in the heaven called 'Saket') (7) [3/7/6-7].

Lord Ram Meeting sage Sarbhanga: Ram Charit Manas

पुनि आए जहाँ मुनि सरभंगा । सुंदर अनुज जानकी संगी ॥ [3/7/8]
जोग जग्य जप तप ब्रत कीन्हा । प्रभु कहँ देइ भगति बर लीन्हा ॥7
एहि बिधि सर रचि मुनि सरभंगा । बैठे हृदयँ छाड़ि सब संगी ॥8 [3/8/7-8]
अस कहि जोग अग्नि तनु जारा । राम कृपाँ बैकुंठ सिधारा ॥ [3/9/1]

After that (liberation of Viradh) the Lord, accompanied by his lovely younger brother (Laxman) and Sita (wife), visited the hermitage of sage Sarbhanga [3/7/8].

The sage offered to the Lord all the fruits of whatever Yoga (concentration/meditation), sacrifice, chanting of Lord's holy name (Japa), penance and fastings (Tapa) that he had done in his life, and in exchange he took the boon of devotion from the Lord (7). Having thus obtained the rare gift of having exemplary level of

devotion, the sage arranged a funeral pile for himself, and leaving all attachments behind, he ascended it. (8) [3/8/7-8].

Then, bearing Lord Ram in his heart, he burnt his mortal body by the fire of yoga and went to Vaikuntha (Saket, the celestial abode of the Lord) due to Lord Ram's grace and mercy [3/9/1].

[Note : This burning of the body by 'fire of Yoga' is achieved by friction of the vital airs inside the Yogi's body. Sage Sharbhanga had burnt himself in the fire that he lit. That is, he had sacrificed his own self—which is the highest form of sacrifice.]

Lord Ram's Vow to kill the demons: Ram Charit Manas

अस्थि समूह देखि रघुराया । पूछी मुनिन्ह लागि अति दाय ।।6
 निसिचर निकर सकल मुनि खाए । सुनि रघुबीर नयन जल छाए ।।8 [3/9/6,8]
 दोहा- निसिचर हीन करउँ महि भुज उठाइ पन कीन्ह ।
 सकल मुनिन्ह के आश्रमन्हि जाइ जाइ सुख दीन्ह ।। [Doha 3/9.]

Seeing a huge heap of bones somewhere in the dense forest, Lord Ram was moved by compassion, and he enquired the hermits and sages residing there about it (6). They told him that the demons had devoured the hermits and sages, and threw the bones after eating the flesh. Hearing this, the eyes of Lord Ram were filled with tears (8). Then Lord Ram raised his arms and took a solemn vow—"I shall rid the earth of demons."

Thereafter, he went to the hermitages of all the sages that came on the way as he moves slowly ahead through the forest, and the Lord gave all of them lots of happiness and joy. [The sages and hermits were pleasantly astonished to see the Lord appearing in person at their hermitages, and were naturally overwhelmed with surging waves of ecstasy and happiness at the good fortune. They felt that all their hard penances and austerities have been fully rewarded when they met the Supreme Lord personally at their hermitages.] [Chaupai lines 3/9/6,8, Doha 9.]

Lord Ram Meeting sage Sutikshana: Ram Charit Manas

मुनि अगस्ति कर सिष्य सुजाना । नाम सुतीछन रति भगवाना ।।1
 प्रभु आगवनु श्रवन सुनि पावा । करत मनोरथ आतुर धावा ।।3
 निर्भर प्रेम मगन मुनि ग्यानी । कहि न जाइ सो दसा भवानी ।।10
 तब रघुनाथ निकट चलि आए । देखि दसा निज जन मन भाए ।।16 [3/10/1,3,10,16]
 दोहा- तब मुनि हृदयँ धीर धरि गहि पद बारहिं बार ।
 निज आश्रम प्रभु आनि करि पूजा बिबिध प्रकार ।।1 [Doha 3/10.]

Sage Agastya had a learned and wise disciple named Sutikshan (1). As soon as he heard that Lord Ram is approaching his hermitage, he rushed out eagerly to receive him, all the while fancying about his good luck (3). And at the instant when he saw the Lord, the sage

became (almost) drowned in a wave of love (and appeared to lose his self consciousness). Narrating this incident, Lord Shiva told Parvati (his divine consort) that the sage's condition was such that it can't be described in words. (10).

Then Lord Ram went near the sage and was overjoyed at seeing his condition expressive of extreme happiness, devotion, love and affection (16).

Gathering courage, the sage fell at the Lord's feet and clasped it again and again. Thereafter, he brought the Lord to his hermitage and worshipped him in various ways [Doha 3/10].

Lord Ram Meeting sage Agastya: Ram Charit Manas

एवमस्तु करि रमानिवासा । हरषि चले कुंभज रिषि पासा ॥1
सुनत अगस्ति तुरत उठि धाए । हरि बिलोकि लोचन जल छाए ॥ 9
मुनि पद कमल परे द्वौ भाई । रिषि अति प्रीति लिए उर लाई ॥10 [3/12/1,9-10]

Fulfilling all the wishes of Sutikshan, Lord Ram, who is also known as 'Rama-Niwas' (literally the one near whom the goddess Laxmi—'Rama'—resides), happily started for his onward journey to the hermitage of sage Agastya (who was born from a Kumbha, a pitcher, hence the name 'Kumbhaj'). (1). As soon as sage Agastya heard of Lord Ram's arrival, he jumped up cheerfully with excitement and rushed out immediately to meet him. Seeing Lord Hari (Ram) right in front, the sage's eyes were full of tears (due to love, devotion, and the fruition of his life-long penances, austerities, sacrifices, meditation etc.) (9). The two brothers (Sri Ram, Laxman) fell at the sage's feet who was filled with immense love and joy as he raised and embraced them affectionately. (10) [3/12/1,9,10]

Departure for Panchvati: Ram Charit Manas

है प्रभु परम मनोहर ठाऊँ । पावन पंचबटी तेहि नाऊँ ॥15
दंडक बन पुनीत प्रभु करहू । उग्र साप मुनिबर कर हरहू ॥16
बास करहु तहँ रघुकुल राया । कीजे सकल मुनिन्ह पर दायी ॥17
चले राम मुनि आयसु पाई । तुरतहि पंचबटी निअराई ॥18 [3/13/15-18]

When Lord Ram enquired of the sage to guide him to a place where he can spend the next phase of his forest exile, Agastya replied—'Oh Lord! There is a most charming and holy spot in a forest where you can live, and it is called Panchvati (15). This place (Panchvati) is situated in a forest called Dandak, so this forest will also be sanctified (purified) by your holy presence, and you would also liberate it from the terrible curse inflicted on it by a sage (called Sukracharya) (16). You make your residence there for some time and bless all the hermits and sages living in the area (17).'

Taking leave of Agastya, Lord Ram approached Panchvati. (18) [3/13/15-18]

Lord Ram Meeting Vulture king Jatayu, and residence at Panchvati: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- गीधराज सैं भेंट भइ बहु बिधि प्रीति बढ़ाइ ।
गोदावरी निकट प्रभु रहे परन गृह छाड़ ॥ [Doha 3/13.]

Outside Panchvati and inside the Dandaka forest, Lord Ram met the Vulture king named Jatau, and the Lord be-friended him. Thereafter, he moved inside the Panchvati area (so called because it was marked by five huge ‘Vat’ or ‘Banayan’ trees that covered a large area and gave it shade from the sun) on the banks of river Godavari. There the Lord took up residence after erecting a hut of thatched leaves [Doha 3/13].

{Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman spent some time at Panchavati. The pleasant place derived its name because there were five (‘Panch’) huge banyan trees (‘Vat’). It was from this place that Sita was stolen by the demon king Ravana. Let us now read what the cause was that ignited the ferocious war that led to the routing of the demons and around which the epic ‘Ramayan’ is woven.}

Demoness Suparnakha's Deformation: Ram Charit Manas

सूपनखा रावन कै बहिनी । दुष्ट हृदय दारुन जस अहिनी ॥3
पंचवटी सो गइ एक बारा । देखिबिकल भइ जुगल कुमारा ॥4
मम अनुरूप पुरुष जग माहीं । देखेउँ खोजि लोक तिहु नाहीं ॥9
तातें अब लागि रहिउँ कुमारी । मनु माना कछु तुम्हहि निहारी ॥10
सीतहि सभय देखि रघुराई । कहा अनुज सन सयन बुझाई ॥20
दोहा- लछिमन अति लाघवँ सो नाक कान बिनु कीन्हि ।
ताके कर रावन कहँ मनौ चुनौती दीन्हि ॥ [3/17] [Chaupai 3/17/3-4,9-10,20, Doha 17]

Now, demon Ravana had a sister called Suparnakha (literally meaning one whose nails are as big as a fan). She had a foul heart, was extremely perverted, and was cruel as a serpent (3). She went to Panchvati once, and on seeing the handsome brothers, was bitten by the lust-bug and got her passion aroused (4). Assuming the form of a beautiful damsel, she made lewd and lascivious proposals to Lord Ram, saying—‘I have searched the three Lokas (the 3 worlds consisting of the heaven, earth and nether world) but could not find a man appropriate to my liking (9). For this reason I have remained a virgin till now, but after seeing you, my mind is set at rest a bit. [That is, when I saw you two, I felt that I have finally found someone to my liking.] (10).’

Lord Ram saw that Sita was terrified, and so he signalled Laxman with his eyes (i.e. secretly, by a gesture) (20). Getting a hint from Sri Ram, Laxman chopped-off her ears and nose with agility and dexterity, thereby challenging Ravana by deforming her (Doha 3/17).

The Barvai Ramayan describes this incident in its verse no. 28 as follows—

बेद नाम कहि अँगुरिन खंडि अकास ।
पठयो सूपनखाहि लखन के पास ।।28 ।।

28-After naming the (four) Vedas symbolized by the to-and-fro (scissor-like clipping) movement of the four erect fingers pointing towards the sky, he (Lord Ram) sent Supernakha to Laxman.

[The Vedas were traditionally taught and received by the oral method. Therefore, the 'ear' was the medium by which the Vedas were transmitted. Since the Vedas consist of hymns, the teacher and the disciple usually wave their 'fingers' in the air to recite or chant them. The 'scissor-like clipping movement' that the Lord used to 'wave the erect fingers in the air near his ears' was to transmit the message to Laxman that he should chop-off the ears of Supernakha. That is, Sri Ram instructed Laxman to chop-off her ears and nose by making signs. The 'nose' is implied in this sign language because to recite and chant the Mantras or the hymns of the Vedas, one has to hold the breath for a prolonged time.]

Slaying of demons Khar, Dushan, Trishara: Ram Charit Manas

खर दूषन पहिं गइ बिलपाता । धिग धिग तव पौरुष बल भ्राता ।।2
धाए निसिचर निकर बरूथा । जनु सपच्छ कज्जल गिरि जूथा ।।4
देखि राम रिपुदल चलि आवा । बिहसि कठिन कोदंड चढावा ।।13 [3/18/2,4,13]

Sobbing and lamenting inconsolably, she went to her cousins Khar and Dushan and challenged them, 'Shame to you and to your manhood, oh brothers! [Look how I was subjected to such humiliation even while you are alive, and it's a challenge to you to get the account squared.]'

On hearing the entire story, the demon chief gathered an immense army of demons. Swarming multitudes of demons of various shapes and forms rushed forth like huge winged mountains mounted on vehicles of different kinds (4). When Lord Ram saw that the hostile forces have arrived, he smiled, and raising his formidable bow, he stringed it (ready to counter attack and neutralize the enemy) (13). [3/18/2,4,13]

दोहा- राम राम कहि तनु तजहिं पावहिं पद निर्बान ।
करि उपाय रिपु मारे छन महुँ कृपानिधान ।। [Doha 3/20/Ka]

One by one, the demons died, yelling and crying "Ram, Ram", (and by doing so, even though out of anger and as a war-cry, they all got salvation because of uttering the holy name of the Lord even unwittingly). Using tricks (because Lord Ram was pitted against a huge army of demons), Lord Ram could kill all of them very quickly. [Doha 3/20/Ka]

Suparnakha instigates Ravana: Ram Charit Manas

धुआँ देखि खरदूषन केरा । जाइ सुपनखाँ रावन प्रेरा ॥5
 बोली बचन क्रोध करि भारी । देस कोस कै सुरति बिसारी ॥6
 करसि पान सोवसि दिनु राती । सुधि नहिं तव सिर पर आराती ॥7 [3/21/5-7]
 सोरठा- रिपु रुज पावक पाप प्रभु अहि गनिअ न छोट करि ।
 अस कहि बिबिध बिलाप करि लागी रोदन करन ॥ [Doha 3/21, Ka]

Seeing Khar-Dushan reduced to ashes (dead), Suparnakha went to instigate Ravana to take revenge (5).

Filled with anger, she admonished and scolded him scornfully—‘You have no regard for your treasury (exchequer), your realm (what is or is not happening in your kingdom), you spend you time drinking and sleeping, unaware that your enemy (referring to Lord Ram because he is the destroyer of Demons) is at your very doorstep.’ Saying thus, she began weeping and lamenting profusely. (Chaupai 3/21/6-7, Doha 21)

Ravana's use of Marich to kidnap Sita: Ram Charit Manas

चला अकेल जान चढ़ि तहवाँ । बस मारीच सिंधु तट जहवाँ ॥ [3/23/7]
 दसमुख गयउ जहाँ मारीचा । नाइ माथ स्वारथ रत नीचा ॥ [3/24/6]
 दसमुख सकल कथा तेहि आगें । कही सहित अभिमान अभागें ॥1
 होहु कपट मृग तुम्ह छलकारी । जेहि बिधि हरि आनौं नृपनारी ॥2 [3/25/1-2]
 तब मारीच हृदयँ अनुमाना । नवहि बिरोधें नहिं कल्याना ॥3
 उभय भाँति देखा निज मरना । तब ताकिसि रघुनायक सरना ॥5
 अस जियँ जानि दसानन संगी । चला राम पद प्रेम अभंगा ॥7 [3/26/3,5,7]
 तेहि बन निकट दसानन गयऊ । तब मारीच कपटमृग भयऊ ॥1
 सीता परम रुचिर मृग देखा । अंग अंग सुमनोहर वेषा ॥3
 सत्यसंध प्रभु बधि करि एही । आनहु चर्म कहति बैदेही ॥5
 तब रघुपति जानत सब कारन । उठे हरषि सुर काजु सँवारन ॥6
 तब तकि राम कठिन सर मारा । धरनि परेउ करि घोर पुकारा ॥14 [3/27/1,3,5,6,14]

Being thus incited, Ravana mounted his chariot and drove off alone to the spot near the sea shore where Marich resided [3/23/7]. The selfish ten-headed demon (Ravana) bowed his head before Marich [3/24/6] and narrated the full story to him with pride (1). Then he asked him to become a decoy golden deer (i.e. assume the fake appearance of a golden deer) so that Sita could be kidnapped (2) [3/25/1-2]. Realising that he is caught between the devil and the deep sea (for if he refused, Ravana was sure to kill him; and if he helped in the kidnapping, Lord Ram was certain to slay him) he sought the refuge of the holy feet of Lord Ram (3,5).

Thus making up his mind, he accompanied Ravana with heart full of infinite love and devotion for Lord Ram's feet. [Marich was sure now that when the Lord pursues him

he will exclusively be able to have his divine sight, and when he would be finally killed by the Lord his salvation is also a certainty.] [3/26/3,5,7].

When Ravana reached Panchvati, Marich assumed the false appearance of a (golden) deer (1). Sita, on seeing such an attractively exquisite creature (3), asked Lord Ram to kill it and bring its hide for her (5). Then, knowing the circumstances and all the reason for the happening, Lord Ram rose joyfully so as to fulfill the work of the Gods (for which reason the formless absolute Supreme Being had assumed a physical form of an incarnation as Lord Ram, and the work was to rid the earth from the torment and agonies inflicted upon it by the demons) (6).

Pursuing the deer, Lord Ram shot it with an arrow as the cunning creature fell down with a loud noise. [3/27/1,3,5,6,14]

सून बीच दसकंधर देखा । आवा निकट जती के बेषा ॥7
 कह सीता सुनु जती गोसाई । बोलेहु बचन दुष्ट की नाई ॥12
 तब रावन निज रूप देखावा । भई सभय जब नाम सुनावा ॥13 [3/28/7,12,13]
 दोहा- क्रोधवन्त तब रावन लीन्हिसि रथ बैठाइ ।
 चला गगनपथ आतुर भयै रथ हाँकि न जाइ ॥ [Doha 3/28.]

When Sita was alone (because on hearing the dying-cry of Marich, Sita had sent Laxman to enquire and help Lord Ram), Ravana, disguised as a recluse, approached her (7) and made vulgar advances. Shocked at his behaviour, Sita admonished him (12), whereupon Ravana showed her his true form (of a 10-headed monster-demon) and Sita was instilled with awe and fear when he told her his real name (13).

Angrily and forcefully, Ravana seated her on his chariot and drove back to his kingdom (Lanka) by the air-route in a great hurry, so afraid he was that he was scarcely able to drive. [Doha 3/28.]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/3—

बैठे हैं राम-लषन अरु सीता ।
 पंचबटी बर परनकुटी तर, कहैं कछु कथा पुनीता ॥1
 कपट-कुरंग कनकमनिमय लखि प्रियसों कहति हँसि बाला ।
 पाए पालिबे जोग मंजु मृग, मारेहु मंजुल छाला ॥2
 प्रिया-बचन सुनि बिहँसि प्रेमबस गवहिं चाप-सर लीन्हें ।
 चल्यो भाजि, फिरि फिरि चितवत मुनि मख-रखवारे चीन्हें ॥3
 सोहति मधुर मनोहर मूरति हेम-हरिन के पाछे ।
 धावनि, नवनि, बिलोकनि, बिथकनि बसै तुलसी उर आछे ॥4 [3/3]

Verse no. 3/3—Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman are sitting inside the beautiful thatched hut in the Panchvati forest (1). At the moment when Sita saw the golden deceitful deer studded with priceless gems, its skin glistening with the hue of gold, she said to her husband

(Lord Ram), 'If you can trap and bring this deer alive, it is worth keeping; and even if it is killed, its hide is very beautiful (and we can use it as a seating mat).' (2)

Hearing the words of his beloved, Lord Ram lifted the bow and arrow. Seeing Lord Ram pursuing it, the deer ran away, but constantly kept glancing back (because) he could recognise Lord Ram who had protected sage Vishwamitra's sacrifice (and had thrown Marich far to the sea-shore using a headless arrow) (3).

The image of Lord Ram running behind a golden deer is very attractive and indescribably beautiful. The Lord's running, bending, taking aim, getting tired and resting a while, and then resuming his run to pursue the golden deer—Tulsidas says that he has permanently etched this enchanting scene in his heart (4) [3/3].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 3/1

पंचवटी बर पर्नकुटी तर बैठे हैं राम सुभायँ सुहाए ।
 सोहै प्रिया, प्रिय बंधु लसै, 'तुलसी' सब अंग घने छबि छाए ॥1
 देखि मृगा मृगनैनी कहे प्रिय बैन, ते प्रीतमके मन भाए ।
 हेमकुरंगके संग सरासनु सायकु लै रघुनायकु धाए ॥2

Verse no. 3/1—Lord Ram is sitting near the hut in Panchvati along with Sita and Laxman. Tulsidas says that the three look extremely beautiful and enchanting (1).

Seeing a golden deer (a fawn), Sita asked Lord Ram to go and fetch it for her. Then, Lord Ram picked up his bow and arrow and rushed towards that deer (2).

The Barvai Ramayan describes this incident in its verse no. 29 as follows—

हेमलता सिय मूरति मृदु मुसुकाइ ।
 हेम हरिन कहँ दीन्हेउ प्रभुहि दिखाइ ॥29॥

29-Sita, who was like an image made of a golden creeper, smiled softly (sweetly) and showed the (decoy) golden deer to him (Lord Ram). [Sita subtly indicated that the golden deer has attracted her attention, and she would like to have it. The comparison of Sita to a golden creeper is because her complexion is fair, and radiant like gold.]

Upon hearing Sita's request, Lord Ram picked up his bow and arrow and rushed towards the golden deer. It has been described in the Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 30 as follows—

जटा मुकुट कर सर धनु संग मरीच ।
 चितवनि बसति कनखियनु अँखियनु बीच ॥30॥

30-The Lord had a crown of matted hairs, held a bow and an arrow in his hands as he ran behind Marich (disguised as a golden deer at the behest of Ravana). The Lord looked back repeatedly at Sita with a sideways glance as he went far away pursuing the deer. This most endearing and enchanting view of the Lord resides in the eyes of Sita.

[When Ravana abducted Sita, she wailed woefully and was exceedingly sorrowful. She had no hope of ever seeing her beloved Lord Ram again. The last image of the Lord that she viewed intently as he picked up the bow and arrow to go behind the golden deer was etched permanently in Sita's memory. This was the last beautiful image of the Lord that Sita enshrined in her heart and mind as the demon Ravana forcefully took her away. The most enchanting sight she last saw of the Lord was permanently engraved in her field of vision—whether she kept her eyes closed or opened, she always imagined that she is seeing the Lord going away behind the golden deer. She was very contrite and regretted her request, but now it was too late.

The Lord had looked back repeatedly at Sita because the Lord is all-knowing and he knew that soon Sita would be abducted and he would not see her for a very long time again. His heart must have cried at the suffering that she would be subjected to for quite some time from now before he goes and retrieves her from the clutches of the demons. But it had to be done—because otherwise the demons would not be eliminated.

It is not that Sita did not know what is coming—she had been briefed by the Lord before hand. That is why the Lord had sent Laxman to the forest to collect firewood, and had requested Sita to enter the fire and leave her image behind so that the Lord could accomplish the task of the Gods for which he had come all the way from the heaven to earth, and then from Ayodhya to the forest. Besides this, she was personified goddess Laxmi, therefore nothing was hidden from her as nothing was hidden from Ram who was Lord Vishnu personified.

That is, they both knew what was coming. But the drama had to be played with the greatest of skill and expertise. No one should get the hint who they actually were—for then obviously Ravana would not have abducted Sita, and the whole enterprise of killing the demons on this excuse of Sita's abduction would have failed.]

{Lord Ram went far away pursuing the golden deer, far enough to give Ravana the chance and the freedom to abduct Sita comfortably. As has been noted above, it was a part of the greater scheme of the Lord, and he wished to make sure that this opportunity was not lost. He did not wish to make Ravana doubt whether he would be able to abduct Sita successfully or not. So he went as far away as was reasonable. Then he shot the deer who was the demon Marich in disguise. The demon cried out aloud the name of Laxman and then the holy name of the Lord softly before he died. His utterance of Lord Ram's name at the final moment of his life ensured his emancipation and deliverance.

Meanwhile, when Sita heard Laxman's name being called out, she thought that the Lord was in trouble. So she persuaded Laxman to go forthwith to the aid of the Lord. This was the opportunity the wicked Ravana was waiting for. He disguised himself as a hermit and came to the hermitage from his hiding place to ask Sita for food. As soon as she came close, he caught hold of her and fled.

The Lord was on his way back after killing the deer, and so when he saw Laxman coming towards him, he knew at once that things have gone wrong, that Sita is not safe.}

रघुबर दूरि जाइ मृग मारयो ।
 लषन पुकारि, राम हरुए कहि, मरतहु बैर संभारयो ।।।
 सुनहु तात ! कोउ तुम्हहि पुकारत प्राननाथ की नाई ।
 कह्यो लषन, हत्यो हरिन, कोपि सिय हठि पठयो बरिआई ।।2
 बंधु बिलोकि कहत तुलसी प्रभु 'भाई ! भली न कीन्हीं ।
 मेरे जान जानकी काहू खल छल करि हरि लीन्हीं' ।।3 [3/6]

Verse no. 3/6—Lord Ram went very far away before killing the deer. The deer cried aloud 'Oh Laxman!' and then softly uttered 'Oh Ram!' before dying. In this way, even while dying, he remembered his old enmity, and at the same time he ensured his salvation.

[By calling out for Laxman, Marich made it appear that Lord Ram was in danger so that Laxman leaves Sita alone and rushes to help Lord Ram. This will give Ravana an opportunity to kidnap her. This will also help Marich settle squares with Ram who had shot and flung him earlier when Marich had gone to defile sage Vishwamitra fire sacrifice. By saying 'Ram' as he collapsed dying, Marich had also pronounced the Lord's holy name which is at once a provider of emancipation and salvation. The Lord's holy name liberates and delivers the soul from the cycle of transmigration and gives it permanent rest. So we see how clever Marich was—he has kept his word to Ravana that he would help him to steal Sita, he has settled his old enmity with Ram, and to cap it all he had even ensured his own Mukti, i.e. his own emancipation and deliverance simultaneously by uttering the Lord's divine name 'Ram' while dying. Definitely it is very clever of him!] (1).

On hearing someone call out Laxman's name, Sita said to him, 'Laxman, someone is calling you in the same manner as Lord Ram would.' Laxman attempted to assure her that there is nothing to worry for the deer has been certainly killed. At this, Sita became angry and forcefully sent Laxman away

Seeing Laxman coming towards him, Tulsidas' Lord Sri Ram said, 'Brother, you have not done good. In my view, some scoundrel has deceitfully abducted Sita.' (3) [3/6].

{When Ravana fled with Sita, she wailed and lamented woefully. She was filled with contrition and regretted what she did—first telling Lord Ram to go and bring the golden deer for her, and then asking Laxman to go away from the hermitage.}

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/7—

आरत बचन कहति बैदेही ।
 बिलपति भूरि बिसूरि 'दूरि गए मृग सँग परम सनेही' ।।1
 कहे कटु बचन; रेख नाँधी मैं, तात छमा सो कीजै ।
 देखि बधिक-बस राजमरालिनी, लषनलाल ! छिनि लीजै ।।2
 बनदेवनि सिय कहन कहति यों, छल करि नीच हरी हों ।।
 गोमर-कर सुरधेनु, नाथ ! ज्यों, त्यों पर-हाथ परी हों ।।3

तुलसिदास रघुनाथ-नाम-धुनि अकनि गीध धुकि धायो ।
 'पुत्रि पुत्रि ! जनि डरहि, न जैहै नीचु ? मीचु हौं आयो' ।। 4 [3/ 7]

Verse no. 3/7—[When Ravana deceitfully kidnapped Sita disguised as a reclusive hermit—] Sita wailed and lamented most woefully—'Alas! Oh my beloved Lord Ram; who knows how far has he gone pursuing the deer! (1). Oh dear Laxman, I said harsh words to you and crossed the line marked by you. So oh son, excuse me. And save me from this hunter (Ravana) (2).'

Then she said to the forest deities, 'Please tell Lord Ram that I have been kidnapped by the vile Ravana. Oh Lord (Ram)! I am in the clutches of this rascal like cow is in the hands of a butcher (3).'

Tulsidas says that hearing Sita's pitiful cry and hearing Lord Ram's name, the vulture king Jatau rushed forward angrily to help her rescue from the clutches of the demon. He said, 'Daughter! Don't be afraid! This scoundrel (Ravana) can't escape from me now; I've come disguised as his own death! (4). [3/7]

{Lord Ram returned to the hermitage and found it empty. He wept for Sita like an ordinary man. It must be noted that he did not wish to divulge his truthful identity to any spy of Ravana who might be watching him. This was absolutely necessary because otherwise the demon king would not fight with him and he would not be able to eliminate the sinful demons as promised to the Gods and the earth.}

The lamentations of Lord Ram have been summed up in the Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 31-33, as follows—

कनक सलाक कला ससि दीप सिखाउ ।
 तारा सिय कहँ लछिमन मोहि बताउ ।। 31 ।।

31-[After Sita's abduction by Ravana—] Sri Ram said, 'Laxman! Where is Sita who is like a golden spike or arrow¹, is like the phases of the moon², is like the flame of a lamp³, and is like a star⁴? Telling me this'.

[Note—¹Sita is compared to the spike or the arrow here because she has become the cause of all future troubles for Lord Ram.

²She is likened to the phases of the moon to indicate that, one, she is as beautiful as the moon, and second, like the moon disappearing on the dark night temporarily only to emerge the next day, Sita too has vanished from sight temporarily and the Lord is sure that sooner rather than later he would be able to see her again.

³She is compared to the flame because the agony of her separation would now burn Lord Ram.

⁴She is compared to the star because she is now as distant and inaccessible for the Lord as the distant star in the sky.]

सीय बरन सम केतकि अति हिउँ हारि ।
कहेसि भँवर कर हरवा हृदय बिदारि ।।32।।

32-Lord Ram said—‘Comparing its beauty, magnificence, charm and glamour with that of Sita, and becoming hopelessly dejected and despaired at its own inferiority, the Ketak flower [the fragrant flower called *Pandarnus Odoratissimus*] tore at its heart and wore a garland of black bees as a token of its despair and ignominy. [This flower is surrounded by black bees which are attracted to it because of its sweet fragrance. The Lord alludes to this. Basically he says that Sita has now been surrounded by gloom and despair that are represented by the Ketak plant which is surrounded by black bees inspite of it being so beautiful to look at.]

सीतलता ससि की रहि सब जग छाड़ ।
अग्नि ताप है हम कहँ सँचरत आइ ।।33।।

33-[Sri Ram tells Laxman—] 'The coolness of the moon (i.e. the moonlight that is soothing and provides peace to troubled souls) is spread in all the directions of the world, but the same moonlight acquires the heat of fire on contact with our bodies.' [The moonlight is unable to provide any comfort and solace to Lord Ram and his brother Laxman who are extremely tormented by the abduction of Sita.]

{ As Ravana fled with Sita, he was confronted by Jatayu, the old vulture king. He tried his best to stop Ravana and rescue Sita, but finally Ravana cut the poor Jatayu's wings with his sword. The bird fell down on the ground, mortally wounded. But he managed to hold his life tenaciously till the time the Lord arrived so that he can pass on the information to him that Sita was abducted by Ravana, and die in the presence of the Lord so that he gets liberation and deliverance forever. Eventually, Lord Ram reached the place, found the dying Jatayu who told the news of Sita's abduction by Ravana, and when Jatayu died the Lord performed his last rites like he would have done for his own father! What more would any living being want? All those who have taken birth are bound to die, but who gets the rarest of rare opportunity that the Lord would perform his funeral himself. In this, Jatayu is the most fortunate character in the story of Ramayan. The other person having the same privilege is Sabari whose last rites were also done by the Lord himself. }

Jatayu's Death: Ram Charit Manas

गीधराज सुनि आरत बानी । रघुकुलतिलक नारि पहिचानी ।।7
अधम निसाचर लीन्हें जाई । जिमि मलेछ बस कपिला गाई ।।8

सीते पुत्रि करसि जनि त्रासा । करिहउँ जातुधान कर नासा ॥9
 धावा क्रोधवंत खग कैसैं । छूटइ पबि परबत कहूँ जैसैं ॥10
 रे रे दुष्ट ठाढ़ किन होही । निर्भय चलेसि न जानेहि मोही ॥11
 चोचन्ह मारि बिदारेसि देही । दंड एक भइ मुरुछा तेही ॥20
 तब सक्रोध निसिचर खिसिआना । काढ़ेसि परम कराल कृपाना ॥21
 काटेसि पंख परा खग धरनी । सुमिरि राम करि अद्भुत करनी ॥ 22 [3/29/7-11, 20-22]
 अनुज समेत गए प्रभु तहवाँ । गोदावरि तट आश्रम जहवाँ ॥5
 आश्रम देखि जानकी हीना । भए बिकल जस प्राकृत दीना ॥6
 लछिमन समुझाए बहु भाँती । पूछत चले लता तरु पाँती ॥8
 आगें परा गीधपति देखा । सुमिरत राम चरन जिन्ह रेखा ॥18 [3/30/5,6,8,18]
 तब कह गीध बचन धरि धीरा । सुनहु राम भंजन भव भीरा ॥1
 नाथ दसानन यह गति कीन्हीं । तेहिं खल जनकसुता हरि लीन्हीं ॥2
 लै दच्छिन दिसि गयउ गोसाईं । बिलपति अति कुररी की नाई ॥3
 दरस लागि प्रभु राखेउँ प्राणा । चलन चहत अब कृपानिधाना ॥4 [3/31/1-4]
 गीध देह तजि धरि हरि रूपा । भूषन बहु पट पीत अनूपा ॥ [3/32/1]

On hearing the pitiful cry of Sita, the vulture king Jatau recognised that it was the voice of Sita, wife of Lord Ram (7). He saw that the vile Ravana was taking her like a cow had fallen into the hands of a barbarian (or a butcher) (8). He said to Sita, 'Daughter! don't be afraid! I will kill this demon.' (9)

Saying this, he dashed forward like a thunderbolt striking against a mountain (10). 'Oh you Rascal, wait! Don't you know me! How dare you go so fearlessly when I am around? (11). The vulture attacked Ravana with its sharp beak and tore at his body. For nearly half an hour, Ravana lay unconscious (20). When he came to himself, he drew his sword angrily and cut off Jatau's wings (21); the poor Jatau fell on the ground, invoking Lord Ram's glory and name (22). [3/29/7-11, 20-22].

Meanwhile, Sri Ram and Laxman, after killing the deer, returned to their hermitage at Panchavati on the banks of river Godavari, and finding it empty they became perturbed and full of sorrow (5, 6). Laxman consoled Lord Ram in various ways, and then they began their search for Sita, asking all the creepers, trees and leaves about her whereabouts (8). After some time they came upon the vulture king (Jatau) lying on the way, wounded, and concentrating his mind on Lord Ram's holy feet (by uttering the Lord's holy name as he writhed in pain and gasped for life) (18). [3/30/5,6,8,18].

Seeing Lord Ram, Jatau recovered a bit and said, 'Listen, dear Ram, the liberator from the circle of birth and death (or from the fear of transmigration) (1). I have been reduced to such a plight by the 10-headed demon Ravana. He has kidnapped Sita (2), and has gone in the south-ward direction from here. Sita was wailing like an osprey (3). I have survived because I wanted to see you for the last time. Now my soul wants to leave this body (4).' [3/31/1-4].

Saying this, Jatau left his mortal body and assumed a divine form which was fully decked up in various clothes, ornaments, and a yellow coloured over-garment called 'Peet' (1). [3/32/1].

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/8—

फिरत न बारहि बार प्रचार्यो ।
 चपरि चोंच-चंगुल हय हति, रथ खंड खंड करि डार्यो ।।1
 विरथ बिकल कियो, छीन लीन्हि सिय, घन घायनि अकुलान्यो ।
 तब असि काढ़ि, काटि पर, पाँवर लै प्रभु-प्रिया परान्यो ।।2
 रामकाज खगराज आजु लर्यो, जियत न जानकि त्यागी ।
 तुलसिदास सुर-सिद्ध सराहत, धन्य बिहँग बड़भागी ।।3 [3/8]

Verse no. 3/8—Jatau scolded and reproached Ravana severely and repeatedly, but the latter did not relent. Then Jatau swiftly attacked the horses with his beaks and claws and killed them, and broke the chariot into splinters (1). Then he snatched Sita from Ravana's clutches, who being severely wounded and seething with anger, drew his sword and cut the wings of the vulture, recovered Sita, and escaped (2).

Tulsidas says that at that moment, the Gods and enlightened ones praised Jatau that as long as he lived, he fought the demon valiantly and did not let him proceed with Sita. Jatau is very lucky, and glory to him! (3). [3/8]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/13—

राघौ गीध गोद करि लीन्हों ।
 नयन- सरोज सनेह-सलिल सुचि मनहु अरघजल दीन्हों ।।1
 सुनहु, लषन ! खगपतिहि मिले बन मैं पितु-मरन न जान्यौ ।
 सहि न सक्यौ सो कठिन बिधाता, बड़ो पछु आजुहि भान्यौ ।।2
 बहु बिधि राम कह्यौ तनु राखन, परम धीर नहि डोल्ह्यो ।
 रोकि प्रेम, अवलोकि बदन-बिधु, बचन मनोहर बोल्यौ ।।3
 तुलसी प्रभु झूठे जीवन लागि समय न धोखो लैहों ।
 जाको नाम मरत मुनि दुरलभ तुमहि कहाँ पुनि पैहों ? ।। [3/13]

Verse no. 3/13—Lord Ram lifted the wounded Jatau on to his lap and washed him with his tears full of love and affection (1). Then he said, 'Oh Laxman, listen! When I'd met the vulture king in the forest, I forgot about the death of our father. But the wicked Gods could not tolerate my peace and they destroyed even this solace which I had been left with (2).'

[It is to be noted here that Jatau is the only and exclusive character in the whole Ramayana who has this privilege of being put on the same or even a notch higher pedestal than Dasrath. It is indeed remarkable that Lord Ram cremated Jatau with his own hands, a benefit which was denied to Dasrath due to circumstances. In Hindu system, it is the eldest son who gets this privilege, and it is a curse, or most unusual, that a father is cremated by someone other than his own sons. However, by cremating Jatau, Lord Ram gave him the rarest of rare privilege which is available not even to the Gods]

Then Lord Ram requested Jatau to keep his body (not to die) but the courageous vulture did not move from his resolve, and said (3)—‘Oh Lord! I wouldn't be cheated for this false life (i.e. I don't want to trade the rare opportunity I've got to attain salvation with living a life which is false and illusionary). Well, he—whose name is unavailable even to the sages at the time of death—is standing before me, well say where shall I find you again, where shall I find such a golden chance to attain liberation and deliverance again. [I'm not so stupid that I'll let go of such a golden and God-sent chance for salvation by bargaining it with a life that is mortal.] (4).’ [3/13]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/15—

मेरे जान तात ! कछू दिन जीजै ।
 देखिय आपु सुवन-सेवासुख, मोहि पितुको सुख दीजै ॥1
 दिव्य-देह, इच्छा-जीवन जग बिधि मनाइ मैंगि लीजै ।
 हरि-हर-सुजस सुनाइ, दरस दै, लोग कृतारथ कीजै ॥2
 देखि बदन, सुनि बचन-अमिय, तन रामनयन-जल भीजै ।
 बोल्यो बिहग बिहँसि रघुबर ! बलि, कहौं सुभाय, पतीजै ॥3
 मेरे मरिबे सम न चारि फल, होंहि तौ, क्यों न कहीजै ?
 तुलसी प्रभु दियो उतरु मौन हीं, परी मानो प्रेम सहीजै ॥4 [3/15]

Verse no. 3/15—Lord Ram said, ‘Oh Father! In my view, you should live a bit longer for a few more days. Give me an opportunity to serve you as a son, so that you can enjoy the privileges of being a father (1). Gods are now pleased with you, so ask them for a divine form and a boon to live according to your wishes, and please everyone by praising and singing the Glory of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva (2).’

Then, hearing such sweet-as-nectar voice and words of Lord Ram, and finding his body drenched in the tears overflowing from Lord Ram's eyes, Jatau looked up to him and said, ‘Son! I'm so exceptionally lucky and so very glad! Believe me, I speak from my heart (3). Even the four fruits (Artha or prosperity, wealth; Dharma or righteousness; Kaam or wished fulfillment; Moksha or liberation from transmigration of soul) are no match to my death (in your arms)!’

Tulsidas says that this argument and logic made Lord Ram speechless because it was the irrefutable truth; Lord Ram's silence was a seal of approval of Jatau's devotion and love for the Lord, as well as his emancipation and salvation inspite of his having a body that is regarded as most despicable (4). [3/15]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/16—

मेरो सुनियो, तात ! सँदेसो ।
 सीय-हरन जनि कहेहु पितासों, हैहै अधिक अँदेसो ॥ 1 ॥
 रावरे पुन्यप्रताप-अनल मँहँ अलप दिननि रिपु दहिहँ ।
 कुलसमेत सुरसभा दसानन समाचार सब कहिहँ ॥ 2 ॥

सुनि प्रभु-बचन, राखि उर मूरति, चरन-कमल सिर नाई।
 चल्यो नभ सुनत राम-कल-कीरति, अरु निज भाग बड़ाई॥ 3॥
 पितु-ज्यों गीध-क्रिया करि रघुपति अपने धाम पढायो।
 ऐसो प्रभु बिसारि तुलसी सठ ! तू चाहत सुख पायो॥ 4॥

Verse no. 2/16—[Sri Ram replied—] ‘Oh dear! Please hear my message. Do not tell father (Dasrath) anything about Sita being abducted, as this will enhance his worries (1).

All the enemies and opponents would burn themselves soon in the fire of your glory, fame, righteousness and noble deeds. [This is a way of Lord Ram showing respect to Jatau.] At that time, Ravana himself along with all his kin and relatives would go and convey all this news in the assembly of Gods. [By saying these words, Sri Ram has ensured a place for Ravana amongst the ‘assembly of Gods’ in the heaven. Indeed, though being a ferocious, cruel, vile and most despised creature (demon), Ravana and his near and dear ones went to the heaven just by the virtue of them being slayed at the hands of the Lord.] (2).’

Hearing these words (of Sri Ram), keeping his beauteous image in his mind and heart, bowing his head reverentially at his holy feet, and hearing Sri Ram's fames and glories as well as his own being sung in the sky (by the Gods), the vulture left for his heavenly abode through the path of the sky. [Here, by saying ‘Jatau went to heaven’, it alludes to his soul that went to the heaven or the abode of the Lord.] (3).

Raghupati (Sri Ram) performed the last rites of the vulture as if he were his (Sri Ram's) own father, and thereafter, the Lord sent him to his own abode.

Tulsidas addresses himself and wonders, ‘Oh you idiot and wicked fool! Do you want to have comfort, happiness, joy and bliss by forsaking (or forgetting, ignoring, neglecting, being opposed to) such a (benign, merciful, gracious, compassionate, benevolent, magnanimous, munificent) Lord? (4).’

Dohawali: Verse nos. 222-227—

222. प्रभुहि बिलोकत गोद गत सिय हित घायल नीचु ।
 तुलसी पाई गीधपति मुकुति मनोहर मीचु ॥

Tulsidas says that the old vulture king Jatau is most lucky and glorious for he was injured while trying to rescue Sita (from the clutches of Ravana) and, though he possessed an evil body, he died in the lap of Sri Ram while gazing at his beauteous face. What a beautiful way to die and attain emancipation of soul!

223. बिरत करम रत भगत मुनि सिद्ध ऊँच अरु नीचु ।
 तुलसी सकल सिहात सुनि गीधराज की मीचु ॥

Tulsidas says that on hearing the news of how Jatau had died, the ascetics, Karmayogis (those who do their duties in a righteous manner), devotees, wise-men,

sages, mystics, hermits, higher and lower born—in short, all men became jealous and praised his death (i.e., all wished that such a death should come to them also).

224. मुए मरत मरिहैं सकल घरी पहरके बीचु ।
लही न काहूँ आजु लौं गीधराज की मीचु ॥

So many have died till now; so many are dying at present; and so many will die with time— but till today no one has got a death comparable to that of Jatau.

225. मुएँ मुकुत जीवत मुकुत मुकुत मुकुत हूँ बीचु ।
तुलसी सबही तें अधिक गीधराज की मीचु ॥

Some are liberated (emancipated) after death, some while still alive. (e.g. sages, seers, mystics, hermits)— there are different types (variations) of salvations. Tulsidas says that Jatau's death and liberation of soul was greater (i.e., far better and superior) than any known type.

226. रघुबर बिकल बिहंग लखि सो बिलोकि दो बीर ।
सिय सुधि कहि सिय राम कहि देह तजी मति धीर ॥

Lord Sri Ram looked at the wounded and immensely suffering Jatau; that (stable-minded and steadfast) creature also looked back at the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) to his heart's content; then after telling them the news of Sita (and the direction she was taken by Ravana) and fervently chanting the glorious holy name of Sita–Ram, Jatau left his mortal coil (body) and died a glorious death.

227. दसरथ तें दसगुन भगति सहित तासु करि काजु ।
सोचत बंधु समेत प्रभु कृपासिंधु रघुराजु ॥

Lord Sri Ram, who is an ocean of graciousness and mercy, performed the last rites of Jatau with a devotion and fervour which was ten times more than what he had for his own father Dasrath, and having done so, he, along with his brother Laxman, gravely mourned his (Jatau's) death.

{The Lord moved ahead on his journey through the forest, and came face to face with a demon called Kabandh. He was a head-less trunk, with arms and legs protruding from its abdomen, and a hole in it for a mouth. He was much like an octopus.}

Liberation of Kabandh: Ram Charit Manas

आवत पंथ कबंध निपाता । तेहिं सब कही साप कै बाता ॥6
 दुरबासा मोहि दीन्ही सापा । प्रभु पद पेखि मिटा सो पापा ॥7 [3/33/6-7]
 रघुपति चरन कमल सिरु नाई । गयउ गगन आपनि गति पाई ॥[3/34/4]

The demon Kabandh met Lord Ram on the way and was immediately vanquished. Then he told Lord Ram the entire story of his curse pronounced by sage Durvasa. But on seeing Lord Ram's holy feet, that curse had been wiped away [3/33/6-7]. Thereafter, he bowed his head at the holy feet of Lord Ram (and regaining his original form of a Gandharva or a celestial dancer he went to heaven. [3/34/4]

{Then Lord Ram and Laxman arrived at the hermitage of Sabari. A brief note on her is appended to the verse of Ram Charit Manas below. }

Lord Ram meeting Sabari: Ram Charit Manas

ताहि देइ गति राम उदारा । सबरी के आश्रम पगु धारा ॥5
 सबरी देखि राम गृहँ आए । मुनि के बचन समुझि जियँ भाए ॥6
 दोहा- कंद मूल फल सुरस अति दिए राम कहँ आनि ।
 प्रेम सहित प्रभु खाए बारंबार बखानि ॥[3/34/5-6,0]
 पानि जोरि आगें भइ ठाढ़ी । प्रभुहि बिलोकि प्रीति अति बाढ़ी ॥[3/35/1]

After liberating Kabandh, Lord Ram went to the hermitage of Sabari (who was a backward caste woman, born in a wild Bhil tribe, but attained sainthood due to her piety and devotion)¹ (5). Sabari saw that the blessing of her guru has borne fruit when she saw Lord Ram enter her hermitage (6). Sabari offered to Lord Ram most delicious edible bulbs, roots and fruits, which he ate with relish. [3/34/5-6,0]

Then she reverentially stood before the Lord with folded hands and palms touching each other as a gesture of showing great respect, and her devotion knew no bounds as she gazed at the Lord's divine face. [3/35/1]

[Note—¹*Sabari*, also pronounced as *Shabari*:--refer Glossary in appendix no. 2 for a short life-sketch of Sabari.]

जनकसुता कइ सुधि भामिनी । जानहि कहु करिबरगामिनी ॥10
 पंपा सरहि जाहु रघुराई । तहँ होइहि सुग्रीव मिताई ॥11
 सो सब कहिहि देव रघुबीरा । जानतहँ पूछहु मतिधीरा ॥12
 छन्द- कहि कथा सकल बिलोकि हरि मुख हृदयँ पद पंकज धरे ।
 तजि जोग पावक देह हरि पद लीन भइ जहँ नहिं फिरे ॥ [3/36/10-12, chand-1]

Lord Ram enquired Sabari to tell him if she knew anything about the whereabouts of Sita (10). She replied, 'Oh Lord! Go to the lake called Pampa, where you'll befriend the

monkey king named Sugriv, who shall tell you everything. Though you know all, it's such a wonder that you still prefer to ask me!" (11-12).

After telling the whole story (about how her own salvation was predicted by sage Matanga at the hands of Lord Ram by having his communion), she left her mortal body by the fire of Yoga, and attained communion of her soul with the Supreme Soul (i.e. she attained the holy feet of the Lord) from where there is no return (i.e. she ended the cycle of re-birth and transmigration of soul). [3/36/10-12, Chand-1]

{Geetawali describes the meeting of Lord Ram and his ardent devotee Sabari in beautiful words. We will read the whole text consisting of a set of eight verses.}

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/1—

सबरी सोइ उठी, फरकत बाम बिलोचन—बाहु।
 सगुन सुहावने सूचत मुनि—मन—अगम उछाहु॥
 मुनि—अगम उर आनंद, लोचन सजल, तनु पुलकावली।
 तृन—पर्नसाल बनाइ, जल भरि कलस, फल चाहन चली॥
 मंजुल मनोरथ करति, सुमिरति बिप्र—बरबानी भली।
 ज्यों कलप—बेलि सकेलि सुकृत सुफूल—फूली सुख—फली॥ १॥

Verse no. 3/17/1—Ever since Sabari woke up today morning, her left eyelids and left arms (biceps) are quivering (palpitating, vibrating). These auspicious signs indicate some good tidings which are even difficult for the sages and hermits to imagine; her heart has immense bliss and joy which is rare even for them. Her eyes are full of tears and the body is thrilled. She erected a thatched hut of reeds and grass, filled a pot with water and started towards the forest path (from where she expected Sri Ram and Laxman to arrive). She has pleasant hopes in her heart and repeatedly recalls the auspicious prophesy of sage Matang (that she will have the good fortune of seeing the divine form of Lord Sri Ram). It appears that the Kalpa-creeper, already blooming with beautiful flowers, has collected all the rewards (fruits) of the good deeds there are, converted them into fruits of bliss, happiness and joy, and has got itself laden with them. [Here, the creeper is Sabari, the flowers are her virtues and noble characters, the good deeds are the long services she had rendered to sage Matang after being castrated by the society and condemned by it, and the fruit is her final reward in the form of having Darshan or divine and holy viewing of the Lord, followed by her emancipation and final salvation.] (1)."

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/2—

प्रानप्रिय पाहुने ऐहैं राम—लषन मेरे आजु।
 जानत जन—जियकी मृदु चित राम गरीबनिवाज॥
 मृदु चित गरीबनिवाज आजु बिराजिहैं गृह आइकै।
 ब्रह्मादि संकर—गौरी पूजित पूजिहौं अब जाइकै॥

लहि नाथ हौं रघुनाथ-बानो पतितपावन पाइकै।
दुहु ओर लाहु अघाइ तुलसी तीसरेहु गुन गाइकै॥ 2॥

Verse no. 3/17/2—[She contemplates—] 'Ah! Today my dearer-than-life guests Sri Ram and Laxman would come. Sri Ram—who is of a sweet temperament, is the sustainer and benefactor of the poor, lowly, humble and downtrodden—knows what is inside the mind of his devotees (because he is all-knowing, all-pervading, omnipresent and resides in the heart of his devotees). Now, I shall (go and) worship Sri Ram who is worshipped by Brahma, Shiva, Parvati and other Gods. Invoking Raghunath's (Sri Ram's) promise and famed glories of making the downtrodden, sinful, lowly and wretched ones into pure and holy ones, I shall now see him as my Lord (benefactor, liberator, purifier, succour and solace provider, sustainer and protector), and shall, as a result, reap the benefits of this world (i.e. I will be getting the rewards of being alive, and specially at the opportune moment when the Lord has manifested himself on this earth and is passing this way) as well as attain liberation (from the shackles of this mundane, delusion-ridden world) and salvation (of my soul). Besides this, the third beneficiary would be Tulsidas who would benefit by singing the virtues and glories of the Lord for eternity (2).'

[Note—The point to note here is that Sabari has kept Tulsidas in mind while thinking of the benefits she will get on seeing Sri Ram. Perhaps Tulsidas was present as a 'spirit' on that occasion to witness that rarest of rare occasion just as he was present at Janakpur garden where Sri Ram had met Sita. Lovely indeed! The narration of these verses is in the present tense which also indicates the poet's presence on the occasion in a 'spirit' form. Here he acts as a scribe, a correspondent, a first hand witness to the unfolding drama of ardent devotion, matchless faith and conviction, as well as of the liberation of a downtrodden, an outcaste and an old wretched lady who was lifted instantaneously to a pedestal higher than that of a mother. This will be evident as we read on—]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/3—

दोना रुचिर रचे पूरन कंद-मूल, फल-फूल।
अनुपम अमियहुतें अंबक अवलोकत अनुकूल॥
अनुकूल अंबक अंब ज्यों निज डिंब हित सब आनिकै।
सुंदर सनेहसुधा सहस जनु सरस राखे सानिकै॥
छन भवन, छन बाहर, बिलोकति पंथ भूपर पानिकै।
दोउ भाइ आये सबरिकाके प्रेम-पन पहिचानिकै॥ 3॥

Verse no. 3/17/3—Then, Sabari made beautiful cups or bowls (out of green, freshly plucked leaves) and filled them with the most pleasant, the sweetest and the most appealing edible roots, stems, fruits and flowers, all of which were most succulent, tastier than Amrit (elixir of life) and most charming to behold. [Of course, the adjective 'tastier than Amrit' alludes to the eatables such as fruits, roots and stems, while 'most charming to behold' apply to all of them including the flowers.]

Even as a mother gathers, prepares and keeps the best of things for her loving child, she brought most attractive and lovely fruits etc. for the Lord, dipped them symbolically in the nectar of love and affection which was thousands of times more succulent and sweeter than Amrit, and kept them away safely for Sri Ram. She spiritedly went inside her hut one moment, came out horridly a moment later, shaded her eyes with her out-stretched palms acting like a shade over her thick set of eyebrows, and looked intently, expectantly, yearningly and most eagerly down the path from where Sri Ram was expected to approach her hermitage. Just at that moment, realizing the intensity of Sabari's love, affection, devotion, endearment and yearning, the two brothers came to her Ashram (3)."

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/4—

स्रवन सुनत चली, आवत देखि लषन-रघुराउ ।
 सिथिल सनेह कहै, 'है सपना बिधि, कैधों सति भाउ' ॥1
 सति भाउ कै सपनो ? निहारि कुमार कोसलराय के ।
 गहे चरन, जे अघहरन नत-जन-बचन-मानस-कायके ॥2
 लघु-भाग-भाजन उदधि उमग्यो लाभ-सुख चित चाय कै ।
 सो जननि ज्यों आदरी सानुज, राम भूखे भायकै ॥3[3/17/4]

Verse no. 3/17/4—When Sabari heard of the arrival of Sri Ram and Laxman, she went forward, and seeing them with her eyes she became overwhelmed with affection, wondering in amazement at her good fortune and the divine sight she beheld—'Oh God! Is this a dream or a reality?' (1)

Saying this, she clasped the Lord's feet, which are the liberator of devotees of their sins (i.e. the Lord's holy feet purify the heart, the mind and the body of the Lord's devotees) (2).

Realising that she is immensely blessed, most fortunate, exceptionally lucky and very privileged though being of a low birth, an ocean of joy emerged from Sabari's heart. The Lord regarded her as if she was his own mother (3). [3/17/4]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/5—

प्रेम-पट पाँवड़े देत, सुअरघ बिलोचन-बारि ।
 आश्रम लै दिए आसन पंकज-पाँय पखारि ॥1
 पद-पंकजात पखारि पूजे, पंथ-श्रम-बिरहित भये ।
 फल-फूल अंकुर-मूल धरे सुधारि भरि दोना नये ॥2
 प्रभु खात पुलकित गात, स्वाद सराहि आदर जनु जये ।
 फल चारहू फल चारि दहि, परचारि-फल सबरी दये ॥3 [3/17/5]

Verse no. 3/17/5—She laid a red-carpet of affection to welcome them (Sri Ram and Laxman), washed their feet by the water of her tears, and then brought them reverentially inside the hermitage and seated them (1). She washed Lord Ram's feet and worshipped him, and this helped Lord Ram to overcome the weariness of the journey. Then she brought edible bulbs, roots, fruits, and germinated seeds etc. in new bowls made of leaves and placed them in front of them (Sri Ram-Laxman). Lord Ram started eating them, all the while relishing them and enjoying their delicious taste—thereby showing his due respects to the poor old woman (2). Symbolically, Lord Ram, by eating those fruits, burned her four accumulated fruits of Artha (prosperity), Dharma (Righteousness), Kaam (wish fulfillment), and Moksha (liberation). Instead of these humdrum rewards, he gave her the fruit of Devotion and Eternal Bliss (3). [3/17/5]

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/6—

सुमन बरषि, हरषे सुर, मुनि मुदित सराहि सिहात ।
 'केहि रुचि केहि छुधा सानुज माँगि माँगि प्रभु खात ॥
 प्रभु खात माँगत देति सबरी, राम भोगी जागके' ।
 पुलकत प्रसंसत सिद्ध-सिव-सनकादि भाजन भागके ॥
 बालक सुमित्रा कौसिलाके पाहुने फल-सागके ।
 सुनि समुझि तुलसी जानु रामहि बस अमल अनुरागके ॥ 6 ॥

Verse no. 3/17/6—The Gods are happily showering flowers and feeling very glad, while the sages and saints too feel extremely delighted and praise (Sabari) for her good fortune. They observed, 'Look how Lord Ram and Laxman are enjoying the offerings (of fruits, edible roots and stems) made by her (Sabari) and relishing its taste as if they were very hungry. Sri Ram (as the macrocosmic Viraat Purush or the Supreme Soul) is the consumer of the various offerings made in a fire sacrifice. It is a great marvel that he is relishing the fruits, desiring more, and Sabari is also repeatedly giving him the fruits one by one with cherish'. This is how Sabari is being praised by the most exalted and fortunate persons such as the Siddhas (mystics, attained ones), sages Sankadi etc., and Lord Shiva. They all feel thrilled and emotional at the sight of the Lord being served by her.

Ah! The sons of Kaushalya and Sumitra (Sri Ram and Laxman respectively) are partaking (or relishing, enjoying the taste of) raw fruits and vegetables offered to them (by Sabari) as the most honoured guests. [By referring to their mothers, Tulsidas means that Sri Ram and Laxman were born to queens, were accustomed to most delicious of foods, and were pampered with the choicest of delicacies. But today, in order to uphold the sanctity of the old Sabari's love and affection for them, they are relishing raw fruits and vegetable products as if they were the most delicious and choicest of eatables offered in the royal palace by their respective mothers.]

Tulsidas asserts that after hearing what he (Tulsidas) says, one must become certain and convinced that Sri Ram is moved only by, or is subject to control only by, or can be overcome only by devotion and love which are pure, with deceit, and sincere, and nothing else. [Indeed, even the most humble, downtrodden, out castes and lowly creatures

were embraced by Sri Ram relying on the basis of their having undiluted love, affection and devotion of the highest order for the Lord. Some of these examples are the following—the Kols, Kirats, Bhils (forest tribal), Nishad (the boatman), Guha (cave dwellers), vulture (Jatau), Sabari (the outcaste old lady), monkeys (Sugriv), bears (Jamvant), demons (Vibhishan) etc.] (6).”

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/7—

रघुबर अँचइ उठे, सबरी करि प्रनाम कर जोरि।
 हौं बलि बलि गई, पुरई मंजु मनोरथ मोरि॥
 पुरई मनोरथ, स्वारथहु परमारथहु पूरन करी।
 अघ—अवगुनन्हिकी कोठरी करि कृपा मुद मंगल भरी॥
 तापस—किरातिनि—कोल मृदु मूरति मनोहर मन धरी।
 सिर नाइ, आयसु पाइ गवने, परमनिधि पाले परी॥ 7॥

Verse no. 3/17/7—[After eating—] Raghubar (Sri Ram) drank a sip of water (i.e. he sipped a little quantity of water just enough to clean his mouth), and got up. Then Sabari folded her hands (i.e. joined her palms), bowed her head reverentially to him, and said, ‘I sacrifice myself upon you (literally, thank you very much indeed) for you have fulfilled my most earnest desire. You have fulfilled my (life long) quest and have also satisfied my self interest related to this mundane existence (by accepting my fruits and by being my honoured guest) as well as my spiritual well being (by ensuring my emancipation and salvation).

I was a store-house (treasury, fount) of sins, evils, vices, malfeasance, unrighteousness and what not, but you have (emptied the room of all these and) filled it instead with happiness, bliss and auspiciousness.’

At that time, the austere hermits, Kirats and Kols and other such forest-dwelling tribes (who were present on that happy and auspicious occasion), established the Lord's beautiful, pleasant and magnificent image in their respective hearts, bowed their heads in front of him (in reverence and to pay obeisance), got his permission (to leave), obtained the most precious gift (literally, wealth) of devotion, affection and love for the Lord, and then went to their respective homes (7).”

Geetawali: Verse no. 3/17/8—

सिय-सुधि सब कही नख-सिख निरखि निरखि दोउ भाइ ।
 दै दै प्रदच्छिना करति प्रनाम, न प्रेम अघाइ ॥1
 अति प्रीति मानस राखि रामहि, राम-धामहि सो गई ।
 तेहि मातु-ज्यौं रघुनाथ अपने हाथ जल-अंजलि दर्ई ॥2
 तुलसी-भनित, सबरी-प्रनति, रघुबर-प्रकृति करुनामई ।
 गावत, सुनत, समुझत भगति हिय होय प्रभुपद नित नई ॥3 [3/17/8]

Verse no. 3/17/8—Sabari gave Lord Ram the entire news about Sita, and watching the countenance of the two brothers, circumambulating them repeatedly, her affection (motherly love) knew no bounds (1). She made her heart the abode of Lord Ram, and brimming with devotion, she went to the heavenly abode of the Lord. Lord Ram cremated her and performed her last rites as befitting his own mother (2).

By singing the verses of Tulsidas, remembering the prayers and devotion of Sabari and singing the praises of the Lord of a benevolent and merciful nature, one can surely achieve the Eternal Blissful state of consciousness (existence) obtained by attaining the Shanti Pad (i.e. by obtaining the Holy Feet of the Lord that gives eternal peace and bliss to the soul of the creature) (3). [3/17/8]

{Moving ahead, Lord Ram and Laxman arrived at the lake known as Pampa where the celestial sage Narad came to visit Lord Ram.}

Ram's arrival at Lake Pampa: Ram Charit Manas

चले राम त्यागा बन सोऊ । अतुलित बल नर केहरि दोऊ ॥[3/37/1]
पुनि प्रभु गए सरोबर तीरा । पंपा नाम सुभग गंभीरा ॥[3/39/6]

Lord Ram left that forest (the Dandak forest) and went ahead. They (Ram and Laxman) were like lions amongst men, and they possessed immense strength (3/37/1). Then they reached lake Pampa. Its water was as placid and clean as the heart of saints (3/39/6).

देखि राम अति रुचिर तलावा । मज्जनु कीन्ह परम सुख पावा ॥ 1
देखी सुंदर तरुबर छाया । बैठे अनुज सहित सघुराया ॥2 [3/41/1-2]

Seeing the beautiful and enchanting lake, Lord Ram bathed in it and found immense joy by doing so. Then, seeing a nice shady tree, he sat down with his brother (to rest) [3/41/1-2].

Lord Ram meeting the celestial sage Narad: Ram Charit Manas

ऐसे प्रभुहि बिलोकउँ जाई । पुनि न बनिहि अस अवसरु आई ॥7
यह बिचारि नारद का बीना । गए जहाँ प्रभु सुख आसीना ॥8
करत दंडवत लिए उठाई । राखे बहुत बार उर लाई ॥10
स्वागत पूँछि निकट बैठारे । लछिमन सादर चरन पखारे ॥11 [3/41/7-8,10-11]

The celestial sage Narad¹ was confused at the worldly behaviour and playfull activities/affairs of the Lord, so deciding that it was the best opportunity to meet him, he

came at Lake Pampa where Sri Ram and Laxman were resting (7-8). He prostrated himself reverentially before the Lord, who lifted and embraced him (10). Then, welcoming the sage, Lord Ram seated Narad near him, while Laxman washed his feet (12). [3/41/7-8,10-11]

[Note—¹*Narad*—See Glossary in appendix no. 2 at the back of the book for a pen sketch of Narad.]

Narad's departure: Ram Charit Manas

छन्द- सिरु नाइ बारहिं बार चरनन्हि ब्रह्मपुर नारद गए ।
ते धन्य तुलसीदास आस बिहाइ जे हरि रँग रँए ॥ [3/46/Chand-2]

After thoroughly removing all his doubts and confusions, Narad bowed his head again and again, and went to the heavenly abode of his father Brahma.

Tulsidas says that those people are blessed who, surrendering all hopes, are steeped in love and devotion for Lord Hari (Sri Ram) [3/41/7-8,10-11]

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Chapter 6

Kishkindha Kand

{This chapter deals with the following major events in the life story of Lord Sri Ram—Meeting with Hanuman, alliance with monkey king Sugriv, killing of Bali and coronation of Surgiv on the throne of Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey race, departure of monkeys in search of Sita, their arrival at the seashore off Sri Lanka, and advice of Sampati (Vulture) that they should leap across the ocean if they really wish to meet Sita because she is held in captivity in Lanka located in the middle of the ocean.

This Kand is called 'Kishkindha' because the geographical area falls under the jurisdiction of the kingdom of Kishkindha. It was the kingdom of the monkeys and bears. Its headquarters was the city of Kishkindha. }

Lord Ram's arrival at Kiskindha and Mt. Rishyamuk: Ram Charit Manas

आगेँ चले बहुरि रघुराया । रिष्यमूक पर्वत निअराया ॥१॥

तहँ रह सचिव सहित सुग्रीवा । आवत देखि अतुल बल सीवा ॥2
 अति सभित कह सुनु हनुमाना । पुरुष जुगल बल रूप निधाना ॥3
 धरि बटु रूप देखु तैं जाई । कहेसु जानि जियँ सयन बुझाई ॥4[4/1/1-4]

Leaving lake Pampa (previous chapter), Lord Ram proceeded further and entered the forest region called Kishkindha. There he neared the mountain called Rishyamuk on which lived the exiled prince of monkeys named Sugriv along with his ministers. When he saw the two brothers, who were akin to bold and immensely courageous lions, he got frightened (because he thought his elder brother Bali, who had banished him from the capital due to some misunderstanding, had sent two warriors to kill him) and asked his main companion named Hanuman to take the form of a Brahmin student and go and find out the truth. If the guests were hostile, then Hanuman was to send a signal to Sugriv so that he could make good his escape.[4/1/1-4]

[Note : Kishkindha, Rishyamuk mountain etc. are situated on the banks of river Tungbhadra in the erst-while Vijaya-Nagaram empire in the south of India. Its capital was at Hamphi.]

Lord Ram's meeting with Hanuman: Ram Charit Manas

बिप्र रूप धरि कपि तहँ गयऊ । माथ नाइ पूछत अस भयऊ ॥6
 को तुम्ह स्यामल गौर सरीरा । छत्री रूप फिरहु बन बीरा ॥7 [4/1/6-7]
 कोसलेस दसरथ के जाए । हम पितु बचन मानि बन आए ॥1
 नाम राम लछिमन दोउ भाई । संग नारि सुकुमारि सुहाई ॥2
 इहाँ हरी निसिचर बैदेही । बिप्र फिरहिं हम खोजत तेही ॥3
 प्रभु पहिचानि परेउ गहि चरना । सो सुख उमा जाइ नहिं बरना ॥5 [4/2/1-3, 5]
 तब रघुपति उठाइ उर लावा । निज लोचन जल सींचि जुड़ावा ॥ [4/3/6]

Hanuman assumed the form of a Brahmin and went there, bowed his head before Lord Ram and asked (6), ‘Sir, who are you two—one with a dark and the other with a fair complexion? You look as if you belong to the warrior class (Kshatriya); why are you wandering in the forest?’ (7) [4/1/6-7]

Lord Ram introduced himself and Laxman, saying—‘We are the sons of King Dasrath of Kaushal (Ayodhya) and have come to the forest to fulfill the vows of our father (1). Our names are Ram and Laxman, and we are brothers. We had a lady with us (2) who has been abducted by demons; we are roaming around searching for her (3).’

Recognising his Lord, Hanuman fell at Lord Ram's feet. Lord Shiva tells his consort Parvati that the infinite joy that Hanuman got at meeting his Lord is beyond words to describe (5) [4/2/1-3,5].

Then Lord Ram lifted him up, embraced him, and showed his immense affection for him by drenching him with his tears. [That is, the Lord wept when he met Hanuman as if he has met some long lost friend or companion of his.] [4/3/6].

{Hanuman took the initiative and helped to strick a bond of friendship between Lord Ram and Sugriv, the exiled king of Kishkindha and the younger brother of Vaali.}

Friendship Pact and Alliance with Sugriv: Ram Charit Manas

नाथ सैल पर कपिपति रहई । सो सुग्रीव दास तव अहई ॥2
 तेहि सन नाथ मयत्री कीजे । दीन जानि तेहि अभय करीजे ॥3
 सो सीता कर खोज कराइहि । जहाँ तहाँ मरकट कोटि पठाइहि ॥4
 जब सुग्रीवँ राम कहूँ देखा । अतिसय जन्म धन्य करि लेखा ॥6
 सादर मिलेउ नाइ पद माथा । भेंटेउ अनुज सहित रघुनाथा ॥7
 दोहा- तब हनुमंत उभय दिसि की सब कथा सुनाइ ।
 पावक साखी देइ करि जोरी प्रीति दृढ़ाइ ॥ [4/4/2-4,6-7,0]

Hanuman told Lord Ram, 'Lord, the king of monkeys called Sugriv resides on this (Rishyamuk) mountain; he is your servant. Please make friendship with him and make him fearless because he too is distressed. He will help you in the search of Sita by sending monkeys in all directions.' [4/4/2-4, 6-7]

Thus, taking Lord Ram to Sugriv, he explained the circumstances of both sides to each other. Then, making a sacred fire stand as witness, a firm alliance between Lord Ram and Sugriv was made. [4/4/0]

The Barvai Ramayan describes this meeting between Lord Ram and Sugriv as follows in its verse nos. 34-35—

स्याम गौर दोउ मूरति लछिमन राम ।
 इन तें भइ सित कीरति अति अभिराम ॥34॥

34-[Hanuman introduced Sri Ram to Sugriv and said—] 'These dark and fair complexioned brothers are named Sri Ram and Laxman respectively. The patron goddess of the virtue of 'Kirti' (repute, fame, glory, renown, honour, celebrity status, credit etc.) has found her importance, her greatness, her powers and her majesty because of their blessing.'

[That is, since Lord Ram is the Supreme Being himself personified, these grand virtues of the world derive their inherent glory from the Lord. If anyone acquires these virtues that come under the overall definition of 'Kirti' then surely it is because the Lord has blessed him with them.

Hanuman praised the Lord to impress upon Sugriv that it will be in his interest to make friends with Lord Ram and Laxman.]

कुजन पाल गुन बर्जित अकुल अनाथ ।
 कहहु कृपानिधि राउर कस गुन गाथ ॥35॥

35-[Sugriv was convinced of Lord Ram's greatness. So he tells the Lord—] 'Oh the one who is an abode of mercy, kindness and grace! How can I describe your glories and virtues—you are the only one who can protect someone like me who is evil, wicked and lacking in good virtues and characters, who is born in a low clan and race, and who is a destitute.' [Sugriv is being modest and humble, because no one should be boastful before the Lord of the world.]

{After making friendship with Sugriv, Lord Ram sat down with him and both exchanged news and information about each other. Then Sugriv showed him some of the ornaments and pieces of clothes that Sita had thrown from the sky as Ravana's chariot was passing over the Rishyamook mountain towards Lanka. She thought it wisely that if anyone picks them up and showed them to the Lord when he comes that way searching for her trail, these things would help to convince the Lord that she was being taken in the direction where the Lord was heading. Sugriv had picked them up, and now he showed them to the Lord for identification.}

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 4/1—

भूषन बसन बिलोकत सियके ।
 प्रेम-बिबस मन, कंप पुलक तनु, नीरजनयन नीर भरे पियके ॥1
 सकुचत कहत, सुमिरि उर उमगत, सील-सनेह-सुगुनगन तियके
 स्वामि-दसा लखि लखन सखा कपि, पिघले हैं आँच माठ मानो धियके
 सोचत हानि मानि मन, गुनि-गुनि, गये निघटि फल सकल सुकिय के
 बरने जामवंत तेहि अवसर, बचन बिबेक वीररस बियके ॥3
 धीर बीर सुनि समुझि परसपर बल-उपाय उघटत निज हियके
 तुलसिदास यह समउ कहेतें कबि लागत निपट जड़ जियके ॥4 [4/1]

Verse no. 4/1—[When Sita was being kidnapped by Ravana, his chariot flew over the mount where Sugriv and others lived. Seeing them, Sita had dropped some of her ornaments from the sky as a token and proof of her identity. She wisely thought that should Lord Ram happen to pass that way he may pick these up and know the rough direction in which she was proceeding. Now, presently, Sugriv showed them to him as a proof of the truth of what he was saying about having seen Sita being taken away by the air route by a demon.]

On seeing Sita's ornaments, Lord Ram was thrilled, his eyes became wet with tears and his heart overflowed with affection and joy (1). He hesitated at praising the glory of Sita. [She being his wife, it would sound unconventional and inappropriate to utter praises for her in front of other male companions], but her memory filled his heart with joy. Seeing his condition, Laxman, Sugriv and other monkeys also felt so emotional as if butter has started melting on contact with (emotional) heat (2). They became dejected and distressed at the thought of Sita's sufferings. At that time, the old bear-king called Jamvant consoled Lord Ram in different ways, using words of wisdom and

courage (3). Encouraged by him, the assembly began to ponder on ways to find and rescue Sita instead of wasting time in wailings and lamenting uselessly. Tulsidas says that a poet's heart appears to be emotionless, merciless and harsh because he is describing those moments (i.e. he should not describe such a pitiful scene).

[Here, Tulsidas is referring to himself because he is the poet who is describing these moments. What he actually means is that one should not regard him as being merciless and heartless simply because he describes such poignant moments, but one should understand that as a poet and a scribe it is his moral duty that he narrates everything as it happened in a neutral manner, regardless of whether any event or moment is painful or not.] (4) [4/1].

Ram Charit Manas:

कह सुग्रीव नयन भरि बारी । मिलिहि नाथ मिथिलेसकुमारी ॥2
मंत्रिन्ह सहित इहाँ एक बारा । बैठ रहेउँ मैं करत बिचारा ॥3
गगन पंथ देखी मैं जाता । परबस परी बहुत बिलपाता ॥4
राम राम हा राम पुकारी । हमहि देखि दीन्हेउ पट डारी ॥5
मागा राम तुरत तेहिं दीन्हा । पट उर लाइ सोच अति कीन्हा ॥6
कह सुग्रीव सुनुहु रघुबीरा । तजहु सोच मन आनहु धीरा ॥7
सब प्रकार करिहउँ सेवकाई । जेहि बिधि मिलिहि जानकी आई ॥8 [4/5/2-8].

Eyes filled with tears, Sugriv said, 'Lord, don't worry, Sita shall be found (2). I was once sitting here with my ministers, consulting them on some matter (3). I saw Sita going by the air-route; she was under great duress and in control (subjugation) of the demon and wailing loudly (4). Seeing us, she cried out 'Oh Ram' repeatedly and dropped her scarf (as a souvenir) (5).'

Lord Ram asked for it, and Sugriv gave it immediately. Recognising it as being that of Sita, Lord Ram put it to his heart and grieved a lot (6). Sugriv consoled him and asked him to have fortitude and courage (7). He assured Lord Ram that he would help him in all possible ways in which Sita can be found and recovered (8). [4/5/2-8]

Killing of Bali and Sugriv's coronation as king: Ram Charit Manas

नाथ बालि अरु मैं द्वौ भाई । प्रीति रही कछु बरनि न जाई ॥1
मय सुत मायावी तेहि नाऊँ । आवा सो प्रभु हमरें गाऊँ ॥2
धावा बालि देखि सो भागा । मैं पुनि गयउँ बंधु सँग लागा ॥4
मंत्रिन्ह पुर देखा बिनु साई । दीन्हेउ मोहि राज बरिआई ॥9
बाली ताहि मारि गृह आवा । देखि मोहि जियँ भेद बढ़ावा ॥10
रिपु सम मोहि मारेसि अति भारी । हरि लीन्हेसि सर्वसु अरु नारी ॥11
दोहा- सुनु सुग्रीव मारिहउँ बालिहि एकहिं बान ।
ब्रह्म रुद्र सरनागत गाएँ न उबरिहिं प्रान ॥ [4/6/1-2,4,9-11,0]
दोहा- बहु छल बल सुग्रीव कर हियँ हारा भय मानि ।
मारा बालि राम तब हृदय माझ सर तानि ॥ [Doha no. 8.]

Now, explaining the circumstances of his exile, Sugriv told Lord Ram—‘I and Bali are two brothers; we had great affection for each other (1). One demon named Mayavi came to our town once (2); and seeing him, Bali rushed out to face him, where upon the demon took flight with Bali in hot pursuit behind him (4). [Then, fighting each other, they entered a cavern. Seeing blood ooze out of its entrance after sometime, I thought that Bali has been killed, and so out of fear for my life, I closed the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder and came back to the town of Kiskindha.]

The ministers, seeing no one to head the kingdom, forcefully enthroned me (9). When Bali returned after killing the demon, he was filled with anger and hate (10). He thrashed me mercilessly and snatched my wife and all my belongings, and sent me to exile here (11).’ [4/6/1-2,4,9-11].

Seeing his predicament and how injustice was done to him, Lord Ram emphasised with him and vowed to help Sugriv by killing Bali and returning the crown of Kiskindha to him. He promised that Bali can't save himself now even if he went to take refuge with Brahma and Lord Shiva. [4/6/0]

And finally, when the duel took place between Sugriv and Bali at the instance of Lord Ram, he used a single arrow aimed at the heart of Bali to kill him. [Doha no. 8.]

राम बालि निज धाम पठावा । नगर लोग सब ब्याकुल धावा ॥
 राम कहा अनुजहि समुझाई । राज देहु सुग्रीवहि जाई ॥9 [4/11/1, 9]
 दोहा- लछिमन तुरत बोलाए पुरजन बिप्र समाज ।
 राजु दीन्ह सुग्रीव कहँ अंगद कहँ जुबराज ॥ [Doha 4/11.]

As was his merciful nature (witnessed and verified repeatedly) Lord Ram did not allow Bali to die in vain—for the Lord sent him to his heavenly abode. Seeing their king dead, the residents became agitated (1). Then, Lord Ram advised Laxman to go and crown Sugriv as the king (9). Laxman, in compliance, called all the elders, Brahmins and senior citizens of Kishkindha, and crowned Sugriv as king and Angad (son of Bali) as Prince Regent. [Chaupai lines 4/11/1,9, Doha 11.]

{Now we move on to the next development. Having put Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha, the Lord waited for some time during the rainy season. Then he ordered Sugriv to assemble the monkeys and the bears and start the search for Sita as he had promised. A huge assembly of monkeys and bears was gathered, and they were formed into groups. All the groups were dispatched in different directions. One that was headed by Angad, the crown prince of the monkey kingdom, and had Hanuman and Jamvant, the bear king as its members, was sent in the south direction. It was this group that finally succeeded in finding the whereabouts of Sita. }

Dispatch of Monkeys in search of Sita: Ram Charit Manas

अब सोइ जतनु करहु मन लाई । जेहि बिधि सीता कै सुधि पाई ॥ [4/21/8]
 ठाढ़े जहँ तहँ आयसु पाई । कह सुग्रीव सबहि समुझाई ॥5
 राम काजु अरु मोर निहोरा । बानर जूथ जाहु चहुँ ओरा ॥6
 जनकसुता कहूँ खोजहु जाई । मास दिवस महँ आएहु भाई ॥7 [4/22/5-7]
 दोहा- वचन सुनत सब बानर तहँ तहँ चले तुरंत ।
 तब सुग्रीवँ बोलाए अंगद नल हनुमंत ॥ [Doha 4/22.]
 सुनहु नील अंगद हनुमाना । जामवंत मतिधीर सुजाना ॥1
 सकल सुभट मिलि दच्छिन जाहू । सीता सुधि पूँछेहु सब काहू ॥2 [4/23/1-2]

After enthroning Sugriv on the seat of power of Kiskindha, Lord Ram spent the rainy season on Mt. Parvarshan. Then he called Sugriv and requested him to make arrangements for the search of Sita [4/21/8].

Sugriv summoned all the monkeys and bears in his army, and when they had all assembled, he addressed them saying (5), 'Look at me all of you! We have to do Lord Ram's pending work. Form groups and go in all directions (6). Search for Sita and make sure to return back within a month's time (7).'

Hearing his command, the army dispersed in all directions immediately. Then Sugriv summoned Angad (son of Bali), Nal (an expert engineer), and Hanuman (a favourite assistant and companion) [4/22/5-7,0]. He ordered them to go southwards in search of Sita, and enquire about her from anyone they met on the way [4/23/1-2].

Geetawali: Verse no. 4/2—

प्रभु कपि-नायक बोलि कह्यो है ।
 बरषा गई, सरद आई, अब लगि नहि सिय-सोधु लह्यो है ॥1
 जा कारन तजि लोकलाज, तनु राखि वियोग सह्यो है ।
 ताको तौ कपिराज आज लगि कछु न काज निबह्यो है ॥2
 सुनि सुग्रीव सभित नमित-मुख, उतरु न देन चह्यो है ।
 आइ गए हरि जूथ, देखि उर पूरि प्रमोद रह्यो है ॥3
 पठये बदि बदि अवधि दसहु दिसि, चले बलु सबनि गह्यो है ।
 तुलसी सिय लगि भव-दधिनिधि मनु फिर हरि चहत मह्यो है ॥4 [4/2]

Verse no. 4/2—Lord Ram summoned Sugriv and said, 'Brother! The rainy season has gone and winter has come, but you have not yet made any effort to search Sita (1) for whom I have borne this body (i.e. I have not died due to the sorrow of parting with my beloved in the hope that one day I will see her). You have not done my work yet (2).'

Hearing this, Sugriv became afraid and bowed his head due to shame. At that moment, huge companies of monkeys arrived in the town of Kiskindha, and their arrival led to celebrations (3). All of them were sent in the 10 directions¹ and ordered to report back within a specified time-frame. Tulsidas says that it appeared that Lord Ram wished

to churn the ocean in search of Sita (an allegory to the mythical churning of ocean by the demons and Gods in search of nectar) (4). [4/2].

[Note—¹The 10 directions are the following = north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

Arrival of search party at the sea-shore: Ram Charit Manas

बहु प्रकार गिरि कानन हेरहिं । कोउ मुनि मिलइ ताहि सब घेरहिं ।।2
 दोहा- दीख जाइ उपवन बर सर बिगसित बहु कंज ।
 मंदिर एक रुचिर तहँ बैठि नारि तप पुंज ।। [4/24/2,0]
 मूदहु नयन बिबर तजि जाहू । पैहु सीतहि जनि पछिताहू ।।5
 नयन मूदि पुनि देखहिं बीरा । ठाढ़े सकल सिंधु कें तीरा ।।6 [4/25/5-6]
 हम सीता कै सुधि लीन्हें बिना । नहिं जैहैं जुबराज प्रबीना ।।9
 अस कहि लवन सिंधु तट जाई । बैठे कपि सब दर्भ डसाई ।।10 [4/26/9-10]

The monkeys looked for Sita everywhere—all the forests, caves, mountains etc. If they found a sage or hermit, they mobbed him asking for information and guidance (2). Enroute, they found a lovely garden with fully blossomed flowers. There was a nearby temple where a lady sat in penance [4/24/2,0]. The monkeys sought her help, and she asked them to close their eyes, and they will find themselves near the sea-shore. She assured them that they will surely trace Sita, so they should not have remorse [4/25/5-6].

Opening their eyes, the monkey warriors found themselves on the shores of the salty ocean, and they took a vow that they will not return back to Kiskindha without getting the where-about of Sita [4/25/9-0].

Lord Ram's meeting with Sampati, and sighting of Sita : Ram Charit Manas

एहि बिधि कथा कहहिं बहु भाँती । गिरि कंदराँ सुनी संपाती ।। 1
 कपि सब उठे गीध कहँ देखी । जामवंत मन सोच बिसेषी ।।6
 तिन्हहि अभय करि पूछेसि जाई । कथा सकल तिन्ह ताहि सुनाई ।।10
 दोहा- मोहि लै जाहु सिंधुतट देउँ तिलांजलि ताहि ।
 बचन सहाइ करबि मैं पैहु खोजहु जाहि ।। [4/27/1,6,10,0]
 गिरि त्रिकूट ऊपर बस लंका । तहँ रह रावन सहज असंका ।।11
 तहँ असोक उपवन जहँ रहई । सीता बैठि सोच रत अहई ।।12 [4/28/11,12]
 दोहा- मैं देखउँ तुम्ह नहिं गीधहि दृष्टि अपार ।
 बूढ़ भयउँ न त करतेउँ कछुक सहाय तुम्हार ।। [Doha 4/28.]
 जो नाघइ सत जोजन सागर । करइ सो राम काज मति आगर ।। [4/29/1]

The monkeys and bears sat near the sea-shore and discussed among themselves their next course of action. Sampati, an old vulture and brother of Jatau, heard their voices in his cave (1) and came out to meet them. Seeing him, the monkeys stood up while the old

bear Jamvant became thoughtful (6). The vulture assured them that he did not mean any harm, and asked the reason for their assembly. They narrated the whole story and purpose of their coming to the sea-shore (10).

Sampati then requested them to take him to the shore where he performed the last rites of his brother Jatau. Then he advised the army of monkeys, 'Listen, I will help you verbally. Then you go, and if you follow my advice, you'll surely find Sita after searching her a little bit [Chaupai lines 4/27/1, 6, 10, Doha 27]. On the summit of a hill Trikut (literally, 3 hills) is the city of Lanka. It is here that Ravana, the fearless one, lives (11). There is a garden with a tree called Ashoka there, and Sita is sitting under it in a pensive and worrisome mode. (12). Don't doubt me; you can't see but I can, because the sight of a vulture is long and penetrating. I have become old, otherwise I would have helped you [Chaupai lines 4/28/11,12, Doha 28]. He, who is able to jump or/ leap across the ocean which is 800 miles wide at this point, can do Lord Ram's work.' [4/29/1].

Preparation for Hanuman's giant leap across the ocean: Ram Charit Manas

कहइ रीछपति सुनु हनुमाना । का चुप साधि रहेहु बलवाना ॥3
 कवन सो काज कठिन जग माहीं । जो नहिं होत तात तुम्ह पाहीं ॥5
 राम काज लागि तव अवतारा । सुनतहिं भयउ पर्वताकारा ॥6
 सिंहनाद करि बारहिं बारा । लीलहिं नाघउँ जलनिधि खारा ॥8
 सहित सहाय रावनहिं मारी । आनउँ इहाँ त्रिकूट उपारी ॥9
 एतना करहु तात तुम्ह जाई । सीतहि देखि कहहु सुधि आई ॥11 [4/30/3, 5-6,8-9,11]

Hearing Sampati's advice, the bears and monkeys started debating as to who was capable to make the giant leap across the ocean, search for Sita and come back safely. The ultimate choice fell on Hanuman because the other two chiefs, i.e. Jamvant (the bear king) was very old (जरठ भयउँ अब कहइ रिछेसा ॥ 4/29/7), and Angad (son of Bali; the Prince Regent) could cross, but was not confident that he will make it back (अंगद कहई जाउँ में पारा, जियँ संसय कछु फिरती बारा ॥ 4/30/1).

Hence, Jamvant, who was the oldest and wisest among the group, addressed and encouraged Hanuman, saying, 'Oh Hanuman! Oh brave warrior! Why are you keeping quiet? (3) What work is so difficult in this world that you can't do it? (5). You have come on this earth to do Lord Ram's task. So get up, and face the challenge.'

Thus encouraged, Hanuman expanded his body so that it became as large as a mountain. [This was to instill confidence among his companions that he indeed is not a meek and ordinary monkey like them, but is surely made of different mettle.] (6). He roared like a lion repeatedly, and said, 'I can leap across the salty ocean in a playful gesture (i.e. this is no problem for me; it is like a sport) (8). I can kill Ravana along with his kin and army, uproot Mt. Trikut (on which Lanka is based) and bring it here (9).'

Jamvant advised Hanuman to have patience; he should just go and search for Sita, meet her, and come back safely (11). [4/30/3, 5-6,8-9,11]

Kavitawali: Kiskindha Kand—

जब अङ्गदादिन की मति-गति मंद भई,
 पवनके पूतको न कूदिबे को पलु गो ।
 साहसी ह्वै सैलपर सहसा सकेलि आइ,
 चितवत चहुँ ओर, औरनि को कलु गो ।।।
 'तुलसी' रसातल को निकसि सलिलु आयो,
 कोलु कलमल्यो, अहि-कमठको बलु गो ।
 चारिहू चरनके चपेट चाँपे चिपिटि गो,
 उचकें उचकि चारि अंगुल अचलु गो ।।2

When Angad and other monkeys became distressed, dejected and hopeless because no one was capable to leap across the vast ocean (and therefore, would be unable to achieve success in finding about Sita), in that circumstance the Wind-God's son Hanuman did not take more than a moment to jump up a mountain. Then he began to survey the landscape in all directions. [His courage and bold demeanour instilled fear among the adversaries / enemies, and confidence in the monkeys.]

Tulsidas says that water sprouted from the earth's bosom, the God Varaaha (the Boar) wriggled, and God Sheshnath and legendary Tortoise lost their strength and courage. [God Varaaha had enough strength to rescue earth on his snout from the clutches of a demon; the serpent god Shesh holds earth on his hood; while the legendary Tortoise supports the huge mountain, used to churn the mythological ocean by the Gods and demons on his back. It simply means that the earth shook violently when Hanuman leapt upwards.]

When he made the final launch, the huge mountain flattened by the downward pressure of Hanuman's feet; and as soon as he was air-borne and the pressure removed, it rose a little bit—about the height measured by four fingers—from its flattened position.

[This indicates a spring-like effect. In modern scientific terms, it is simple to visualize the event if compared to a rocket launch. The downward thrust generated by the leap-frog action of Hanuman's legs was sufficient to flatten the protuberance on the earth (the hill), and having thus become airborne because of the counter thrust upwards, Hanuman launched himself like a rocket. The pressure thus removed, the spring (the hill) tried to regain its former shape, but such was the weight launched that it could rise only four fingers, and not to the original height.]

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Chapter 7

Sundar Kand

{This chapter deals with the following main events in the life story of Lord Ram—crossing of the ocean by Hanuman, his meeting with Vibhishan and then with Sita, laying waste of the Ashok grove (garden) and subsequent burning of Lanka, return to Kiskindha with the good news, Vibhishan's joining Ram's camp, and Lord Ram's march towards the sea-shore with his army of monkeys and bears.

This Kand is called 'Sundar', meaning beautiful, because the earlier atmosphere of hopelessness and despair is replaced by that of hope and success. There is courage, valour and strength on display. All formidable barriers are removed—such as the ocean, and the demons who tried to create an obstacle. The fort of the enemy was burnt to ashes, signaling the beginning of the ultimate victory of the good over the evil. Sita has found new assurance of liberation and deliverance from her seemingly endless sufferings, and Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, was freed from being a virtual prisoner in his own brother's kingdom. All that happens in this Canto is 'beautiful and cheerful'. Things have started to look up in the face of formidable hurdles.}

Crossing of the ocean by Hanuman and overcoming the hurdles en-route: Ram Charit Manas

यह कहि नाइ सबन्हि कहूँ माथा । चलेउ हरषि हियँ धरि रघुनाथा ॥4
 सिंधु तीर एक भूधर सुंदर । कौतुक कूदि चढ़ेउ ता ऊपर ॥5
 बार बार रघुबीर सँभारी । तरकेउ पवनतनय बल भारी ॥6
 जेहि गिरि चरन देइ हनुमंता । चलेउ सो गा पाताल तुरंता ॥7
 जिमि अमोघ रघुपति कर बाना । एही भाँति चलेउ हनुमाना ॥8 [5/1/4-8]

Wishing all his companions good bye, Hanuman embarked on the journey to search for Sita with Sri Ram enshrined in his heart (4). There was a hill near the sea-shore. He sprang on its top (5). Invoking Lord Ram repeatedly, he made a gigantic leap (towards Lanka) (6). The hill, from which Hanuman launched himself, sank underground due to his pressure (7). Hanuman started off like an un-erring dart /arrow of Lord Ram (8). [5/1/4-8].

जात पवनसुत देवन्ह देखा । जानैँ कहूँ बल बुद्धि बिसेषा ॥1
 सुरसा नाम अहिन्ह कै माता । पठइन्हि आइ कही तेहिं बाता ॥2
 आजु सुरन्ह मोहि दीन्ह अहारा । सुनत बचन कह पवनकुमारा ॥3
 राम काजु करि फिरि मैं आवौँ । सीता कइ सुधि प्रभुहि सुनावौँ ॥4

तब तव बदन पैठिहउँ आई । सत्य कहउँ मोहि जान दे माई ॥5
 कवनेहुँ जतन देइ नहिं जाना । ग्रससि न मोहि कहेउ हनुमाना ॥6
 जोजन भरि तेहि बदन पसारा । कपि तनु कीन्ह दुगुन बिस्तारा ॥7
 सोरह जोजन मुख तेहिं ठयऊ । तुरत पवनसुत बतिस भयऊ ॥8
 जस जस सुरसा बदन बढावा । तासु दून कपि रूप देखावा ॥9
 सत जोजन तेहिं आनन कीन्हा । अति लघु रूप पवनसुत लीन्हा ॥10
 बदन पड़ि पुनि बाहेर आवा । मागा बिदा ताहि सिरु नावा ॥11
 मोहि सुरन्ह जेहि लागि पठावा । बुधि बल मरमु तोर मैं पावा ॥12 [5/2/1-12]
 दोहा- राम काजु सबु करिहु तुम्ह बल बुद्धि निधान ।
 आसिष देइ गई सो हरषि चलेउ हनुमान ॥ [Doha 5/2.]

The Gods wanted to ascertain whether Hanuman was strong enough to accomplish the formidable task at hand (1) So they sent the mother of serpents called Sursa, who approached Hanuman and exclaimed (2), 'Today, the Gods have given me a hearty meal. [She meant that she would eat Hanuman.]' Hanuman replied (3), 'Let me finish Lord Ram's work of finding the whereabouts of Sita, inform him about her, then I'll readily make myself available to you to eat me. I tell you the truth, but let me go for the present.' (4-5).

Sursa would not let him go, so Hanuman challenged her to devour him (6). Both of them started expanding their bodies larger and larger, Hanuman to escape her jaws, and Sursa to swallow him whole (7-9). When finally Sursa's mouth expanded to 800 miles, Hanuman suddenly became very small, entered her mouth and came out, thus fulfilling her vow to swallow him (10-11). He then bowed his head to her and asked her permission to leave (12). She blessed him that he would do his Lord Sri Ram's work, and then she went her way (Doha 5/2). [Chaupai lines 5/2/1-12, Doha 2.]

निसिचरि एक सिंधु महुँ रहई । करि माया नभु के खग गहई ॥1
 जीव जंतु जे गगन उड़ाहीं । जल बिलोकि तिन्ह कै परिछाहीं ॥2
 गहई छाहँ सक सो न उड़ाई । एहि बिधि सदा गगनचर खाई ॥3
 सोइ छल हनूमान कहँ कीन्हा । तासु कपटु कपि तुरतहिं चीन्हा ॥4
 ताहि मारि मारुतसुत बीरा । बारिधि पार गयउ मतिधीरा ॥5 [5/3/1-5]

There was a demon in the centre of the ocean, who could catch air-borne creatures by holding their shadows and ate them (1-3). It tried the trick with Hanuman who immediately recognised it (4). After killing it, Hanuman landed on the other side of the ocean (5). [5/3/1-5]

Entry of Hanuman in Lanka: Ram Charit Manas

दोहा- पुर रखवारे देखि बहु कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
 अति लघु रूप धरौं निसि नगर करौं पइसार ॥ [5/3/0]

मसक समान रूप कपि धरी । लंकहि चलेउ सुमिरि नरहरी ॥1
 नाम लंकिनी एक निसिचरी । सो कह चलेसि मोहि निंदरी ॥2
 जानेहि नहीं मरमु सठ मोरा । मोर अहार जहाँ लगि चोरा ॥3
 मुठिका एक महाकपि हनी । रुधिर बमत धरनीं ढनमनी ॥4
 पुनि संभारि उठी सो लंका । जोरि पानि कर बिनय ससंका ॥5 [5/4/1-5]
 प्रबिसि नगर कीजे सब काजा । हृदयँ राखि कोसलपुर राजा ॥1
 अति लघु रूप धरेउ हनुमाना । पैठा नगर सुमिरि भगवाना ॥4
 मंदिर मंदिर प्रति करि सोधा । देखे जहँ तहँ अगनित जोधा ॥5
 गयउ दसानन मंदिर माहीं । अति बिचित्र कहि जात सो नाहीं ॥6
 सयन किएँ देखा कपि तेही । मंदिर महुँ न दीखि बैदेही ॥7
 भवन एक पुनि दीख सुहावा । हरि मंदिर तहँ भिन्न बनावा ॥8 [5/5/1,4-8]
 दोहा- रामायुध अंकित गृह सोभा बरनि न जाइ ।
 नव तुलसिका बृंद तहँ देखि हरष कपिराइ ॥ [Doha 5/5.]
 लंका निसिचर निकर निवासा । इहाँ कहाँ सज्जन कर बासा ॥ [5/6/1]

Landing on the shore (soil) of Lanka, Hanuman observed that the city is guarded from intruders by numerous guards. So he decided to assume a very small form, and enter the city during the night to avoid detection. [Doha 5/3].

At nightfall, he became as small as a mosquito and entered the city, invoking the Lord in his heart (for protection and success) (1). There was a demoness called Lankini, and she was endowed with a special quality that not even an insect could escape her watch. [She was like a modern-day radar, so to speak]. She challenged Hanuman, saying thieves (or intruders) were her food (i.e. she eats them to survive, and so she is ever watchful for any intruder whom she could catch and relish like some delectable snack) (2-3).

Hanuman hit her hard with his clenched fists, and she vomited blood (4). Recovering herself, she folded her hands and joined her palms (as a gesture of surrender and showing of respect) (5) [5/4/1-5]. Then, recalling the warning given to her by Brahma on some earlier occasion that the day she became distressed on being hit by a monkey, the destruction of demons would be close at hand, she blessed him and allowed him to enter the city to complete Lord Ram's task [5/5/1].

Hanuman resumed the small form (of a mosquito), and remembering Lord Ram he entered the gates of the city (4). He searched through each house on the street, and found numerous warriors everywhere (5). He proceeded to Ravana's palace, which was marvellous beyond description (6). He found him asleep, but there was no sign of Sita in the palace (7). Then he located a house different from the others; it was like Sri Hari's (Lord Vishnu's) temple, and built differently (8). Lord Ram's holy name was inscribed on its walls, and it had the holy Tulsi tree (the Basil plant) in its compound. This sight thrilled Hanuman (because it indicated that there was at least one pious and god-fearing soul living in this city infested by cruel and sinful demons [Chaupai lines 5/5/4-8, Doha 5]). He began to wonder how a gentleman could ever live in Lanka in peace because it is an abode of Demons [5/6/1].

Hanuman's Meeting Vibhishan: Ram Charit Manas

मन महुँ तरक करें कपि लागा । तेहीं समय बिभीषनु जागा ॥2
 राम राम तेहिं सुमिरन कीन्हा । हृदयँ हरष कपि सज्जन चीन्हा ॥3
 एहि सन हठि करिहउँ पहिचानी । साधु ते होइ न कारज हानी ॥4
 बिप्र रूप धरि बचन सुनाए । सुनत बिभीषन उठि तहँ आए ॥5 [5/6/2-5]
 दोहा- तब हनुमंत कही सब राम कथा निज नाम ।
 सुनत जुगल तन पुलक मन मगन सुमिरि गुन ग्राम ॥ [Doha 5/6.]
 एहि बिधि कहत राम गुन ग्रामा । पावा अनिर्वाच्य विश्रामा ॥ [5/8/2]

While Hanuman was thus debating, Vibhishan¹ woke up (because it was dawn by now) (2). He began chanting Lord Ram's holy name, hearing which Hanuman realised that the speaker is indeed a gentleman and a pious soul (instead of being a cruel and sinful demon). This thought and the discovery of a god-loving inhabitant in a city populated by demons thrilled Hanuman (3). He decided to meet Vibhishan because being a pious and good-hearted man (because he was chanting Lord Ram's holy Ram), there could be no harm from his acquaintance (4). So, assuming the form of a Brahmin, Hanuman approached him, and Vibhishan rushed to meet him surprised to see a Brahmin in Lanka at that odd early hour in the morning (5). Then, introducing himself, Hanuman narrated to Vibhishan the whole story of Lord Ram till that day, and then disclosed his own name (Doha 5/6). [Chaupai lines 5/6/2-5, Doha 6].

Both of them were thrilled, remembering the glory and praises of the Lord. [5/8/2].

[Note—¹Vibhishan was the youngest brother of Ravana. He was god-fearing and an ardent devotee of Lord Ram. He knew that Lord Vishnu has incarnated as Ram, and that the the Lord's holy and divine name was the only means to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance from the unfortunate circumstance of his having got the body of a demon by providence. He believed that though he had no control over the past circumstance and providence that had forced his soul to enter the body of a demon, but he can mend the future and ensure his deliverance and salvation by taking refuge in the holy feet of the Lord and remembering his always, day in and day out.]

{The story so far has been succinctly summarized in Geetawali as follows—}

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 5/1—

रजायसु रामको जब पायो ।
 गाल मेलि मुद्रिका, मुदित मन पवनपूत सिर नायो ॥ 1 ॥
 भालुनाथ नल-नील साथ चले, बली बालिको जायो ।
 फरकि सुअँग भए सगुन, कहत मानो मग मुद-मंगल छायो ॥ 2 ॥
 देखि बिबर, सुधि पाइ गीधसों सबनि अपनो बलु मायो ।
 सुमिरि राम, तकि तरकि तोयनिधि, लंक लूक-सो आयो ॥ 3 ॥

खोजत घर घर, जनु दरिद्र—मनु फिरत लागि धन धायो।
तुलसी सिय बिलोकि पुलक्यो तनु, भूरिभाग भयो भायो॥ 4॥

Verse no. 5/1—When he got Lord Ram's permission, Hanuman bowed his head reverentially at the holy feet of the Lord with an exhilarated mind, and kept (tucked away safely) the signet ring (given to him by Lord Ram as a token of recognition for Sita) in his mouth (1).

Accompanying him on the mission (to find Sita) were Jamvant (the bear king), Nal, Neel (the engineers of the monkey army), and Angad, the brave son of Bali. At the time of departure, their body parts palpitated to indicate auspicious results (or success in their endeavours), and a happy and comfortable journey (2).

On the way, they came across a cave and examined (explored) it, found Sampati, the king of vultures (and brother of Jatau) who told them the whereabouts of Sita. (Realising that they have a vast ocean stretching before them which has to be crossed twice—once while going to Lanka, and the second time to come back from there, besides the impregnable fort of Lanka and the ferocious demons to be won over—) They (the bears and the monkeys) weighed (judged) their strengths and abilities. (At last, on Jamvant's encouragement—) Hanuman remembered the potent holy name of Sri Ram, glanced at the ocean (in both contempt as well as a challenge), jumped and crossed it (i.e. flew over it) like a bright streak of lightning (i.e. like a bright comet or meteor), and finally landed in Lanka (3).

[Hanuman looked at the ocean with 'contempt' because it was creating a formidable hurdle in fulfilling the Lord's task because of its stubbornness and arrogance. The ocean was haughty that no one can dare to cross it. Hanuman took it as a 'challenge', and wished to tell the ocean 'look, let us see who is stronger—try to stop me if you can. I have great faith in the strength of the Lord's holy name, and I'll invoke it while flying across you, and I dare you to stop me if you have the guts.']

Tulsidas says that even as a pauper (or one who is in dire need of money) wistfully wanders everywhere searching for money, Hanuman went from house to house in search of Sita, and when he finally saw her (in the Ashok grove), he was extremely thrilled and euphoric. In this way, having achieved his goal (or, being successful in his endeavour of finding Sita), he considered himself to be profoundly fortunate (4)."

Hanuman's Meeting with Sita: Ram Charit Manas

पुनि सब कथा बिभीषन कही । जेहि बिधि जनकसुता तहँ रही ॥ 3
तब हनुमंत कहा सुनु भ्राता । देखी चहउँ जानकी माता ॥ 4
जुगुति बिभीषन सकल सुनाई । चलेउ पवनसुत बिदा कराई ॥ 5
करि सोइ रूप गयउ पुनि तहवाँ । बन असोक सीता रह जहवाँ ॥ 6
देखि मनहि महुँ कीन्ह प्रनामा । बैठेहिं बीति जात निसि जामा ॥ 7 [5/8/3-7]
तरु पल्लव महुँ रहा लुकाई । करइ बिचार करौं का भाई ॥ [5/9/1]
देखि परम बिरहाकुल सीता । सो छन कपिहि कलप सम बीता ॥ 12 [5/12/12]
दोहा- कपि करि हृदयँ बिचार दीन्हि मुद्रिका डारि तब ।

जनु असोक अंगार दीन्ह हरषि उठि कर गहेउ ॥ [Doha 5/12]

तब देखी मुद्रिका मनोहर । राम नाम अंकित अति सुंदर ॥ 1
 चकित चितव मुदरी पहिचानी । हरष बिषाद हृदयँ अकुलानी ॥ 2
 सीता मन बिचार कर नाना । मधुर बचन बोलेउ हनुमाना ॥ 4
 रामचंद्र गुन बरनैँ लागा । सुनतहिं सीता कर दुख भागा ॥ 5
 श्रवनामृत जेहिं कथा सुहाई । कही सो प्रगट होति किन भाई ॥ 7
 तब हनुमंत निकट चलि गयऊ । फिरि बैठीं मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ 8
 राम दूत मैं मातु जानकी । सत्य सपथ करुनानिधान की ॥ 9
 यह मुद्रिका मातु मैं आनी । दीन्ह राम तुम्ह कहँ सहिदानी ॥ 10 [5/13/1-2, 4-5, 7-10]
 दोहा- कपि के बचन सप्रेम सुनि उपजा मन बिस्वास ।
 जाना मन क्रम बचन यह कृपासिंधु कर दास ॥ [Doha 5/13.]
 अबहिं मातु मैं जाउँ लवाई । प्रभु आयसु नहिं राम दोहाई ॥ 3
 कछुक दिवस जननी धरू धीरा । कपिन्ह सहित अइहहिं रघुबीरा ॥ 4
 निसिचर मारि तोहि लै जैहहिं । तिहुँ पुर नारदादि जसु गैहहिं ॥ 5 [5/16/3-5]
 मन संतोष सुनत कपि बानी । भगति प्रताप तेज बल सानी ॥ [5/17/1]

Then Vibhishan narrated in details how Sita lived in Lanka (3). Hanuman expressed his desire to meet mother Sita (4), and Vibhishan explained to him in details the location, route, method etc. to meet her. Hanuman took his leave (5), and once again becoming as small as a mosquito, he went to the Ashok grove¹ (6). Reaching there, he hid himself amongst the leaves of a tree (under which Sita was seated), and as the night progressed, watched over Sita, looking for an opportune moment to introduce himself. [He wished to introduce himself under the cover of darkness.] [5/8/3-8, 5/9/1].

Sita was extremely distressed and emaciated. [Upon being separated from her Lord, she had stopped eating, and her agony had had an extremely negative effect on her health.] Each passing second seemed like ages to Hanuman (12). Unable to wait any longer, he dropped the signet ring (which Ram had given him at the time of his departure from Kishkindha). Sita sprang up with joy and grabbed it like it were a spark thrown by the tree to burn herself and rid her of her agonies (Doha 5/12). [Chaupai lines 5/12/12, Doha 12.]

Astonished at seeing the ring with Lord Ram's name etched on it (1), she recognised it instantly, and was filled with a mixed feeling of joy and sorrow. ['Joy' because she was seeing her beloved's ring after so many agony-filled days, and 'sorrow' for it rekindled her memory of her happy days with the Lord and the impossibility of the chances of her ever seeing him again in life as well as the doubts about her beloved's well-being.] (2). She wondered that such a ring can't be made by fraud and trickery, and it is impossible to defeat the invincible Lord Ram (3).

At the moment, Hanuman spoke in a sweet manner (4) and began to narrate the story of Lord Ram, hearing which, Sita's sorrows vanished (4-5). She pleaded with the hidden voice (because Hanuman was hitherto hidden in the leaves of the tree) to come forth (7). Then he presented himself before her (8) and said, 'Mother, I am Lord Ram's messenger; I say it on oath (i.e. I am not telling a lie) (9). I have brought this ring as a token from Lord Ram (for the purpose of identification and establishing my credentials).' (10).

Hearing the sweet and affectionate words of the 'Kapi' (literally a monkey; obviously referring to Hanuman), Sita felt re-assured. She recognised him as a devoted, humble and faithful servant of the Lord. [Sita was assured and confident about Hanuman because of two reasons—one, he had brought the signet ring which proved that he was indeed a true messenger of the Lord, and second, the details of the story of Lord Ram that Hanuman narrated to Sita was absolutely correct, and this also showed that he was indeed someone well acquainted with the Lord.] (Doha 5/13) [Chaupai lines 5/13/1-5, 7-10, Doha 13].

Hanuman assured Sita that her agonies were over, and shortly he shall go and bring Lord Ram back there with the army of monkeys. Lord Ram will kill the demons and take her back to Ayodhya. This deed would be sung in all the three Lokas by sage Narad (the celestial sage who goes around singing the glories of the Lord to the whole world.) [Hanuman also mentioned, in the passing, that had he had the order from Lord Ram, he would have done the task of killing the demons and taking Sita back himself, but his brief was only to search and report back to the Lord.] [5/16/3-5].

Hearing such words filled with devotion, courage, strength and bravery, Sita was filled with satisfaction and re-assurance. [5/17/1].

[Note—¹The royal garden of Ravana was called the 'Ashok Grove' because it was a garden of sweet fruit trees, and so beautiful that it was like a paradise on earth and a remover of all sorrows because of its enchanting beauty. It was also called the Ashok Grove because there were a lot of Ashoka trees (the *Jonesia asoka* or the *Saraca Indica* plant) in it.]

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/2—

देखी जानकी जब जाइ ।
 परम धीर समीरसुतके प्रेम उर न समाइ ॥1
 कृस सरीर सुभाय सोभित, लगी उड़ि उड़ि धूलि ।
 मनहु मनसिज मोहनी-मनि गयो भोरे भूलि ॥2
 रटति निसिबासर निरंतर राम राजिवनैन ।
 जात निकट न बिरहिनी-अरि अकनि ताते बैन ॥3
 नाथके गुनगाथ कहि कपि दई मुँदरी डारि ।
 कथा सुनि उठि लई कर बर, रुचिर नाम निहारि ॥4
 हृदय हरष-बिषाद अति पति-मुद्रिका पहिचानि ।
 दास तुलसी दसा सो केहि भाँति कहै बखानि ? ॥5 [5/2]

Verse no. 5/2—After entering Lanka, when Hanuman saw Sita, his affection knew no limits (1). Her body was emaciated but effused radiance, it was covered with dust (she hadn't bathed), and she looked like Kamdeo (cupid) devoid of his glamour and glory (2). She chanted Lord Ram's holy name day and night. Hearing her agony-filled words and

laments, even the cool breeze did not go near her because it feared of getting heated by the fire of her agonies (3).

Seeing this pitiful condition of Sita, Hanuman began to sing praises of Lord Ram and dropped the signet ring. Sita heard the praises and life-history of Lord Ram, and noticing the ring, picked it up (4). Seeing her beloved's article, she was at once thrilled and full of sorrow. Tulsidas says he is unable to describe that moment (5).

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 5/6—

हौं रघुबंसमनि को दूत ।
 मातु मानु प्रतीति जानकि ! जानि मारुतपूत ।।1
 मैं सुनी बातें असैली, जे कही निसिचर नीच ।
 क्यों न मारै गाल, बैठो काल-डाढ़नि बीच ।।2
 निदरि अरि, रघुबीर-बल लै जाऊँ जौ हठि आज ।
 डरौं आयसु-भंगतें, अरु बिगरिहै सुरकाज ।।3
 बाँधि बारिधि, साधि रिपु, दिन चारिमैं दोउ बीर ।
 मिलहिंगे कपि-भालु-दल सँग, जननि ! उर धरु धीर ।।4
 चित्रकूट-कथा, कुसल कहि सीस नायो कीस ।
 सुहृद-सेवक नाथको लखि दई अचल असीस ।।5
 भये सीतल स्रवन-तन-मन सुने बचन-पियूष ।
 दास तुलसी रही नयननि दरसहीकी भूख ।।6 [5/6]

Verse no. 5/6—Hanuman said to Sita, 'Mother, believe me! I am a messenger of Lord Sri Ram; I am the son of Wind-God (1). I have heard all the mischievous things which Ravana said; he is in the jaws of death, so his mind has gone wild and astray (2). I can defeat the enemy and forcefully take you back, today itself. But I'm afraid to break my Lord's order (because Hanuman's brief was to go, search and report back about Sita, and nothing more), as well as my intervention may hamper the God's work (because Lord Ram was destined to destroy the demons who were tormenting the Gods, and so it would be very improper to interfere with what the creator has ordained) (3). So, Mother, have patience—the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) will construct a bridge within the next four days across the ocean, and accompanied by an army of bears and monkeys, he shall come and meet you (4).'

Then Hanuman reminded her about Jayant's episode at Chitrakoot¹ (with the twin purpose in mind viz.—one, to reassure Sita that anyone who hurts her will be punished by Lord Ram, and second, as a proof of his being Lord Ram's confidante and favourite because that episode was so secret that even Laxman did not know about it). Then he bowed his head in reverence. Thereafter, Sita blessed him (5). Hearing the words of Hanuman, Sita's ears, heart and body found peace and solace; now only her eyes were eager to quench their thirst for the sight of Lord Ram (6). [5/6]

[Note—¹The story of Jayant has been narrated in Chapter 5, Aranya Kand.]

The Barvai Ramayan describes how Sita expressed her pains to Hanuman in verse nos. 36-39 as follows—

बिरह आगि उर ऊपर जब अधिकाई ।
ए अँखियों दोउ बैरिनि देहिं बुझाइ ॥36॥

36-[Sita says to Hanman at the Ashok grove where she was held in captivity in Lanka—] 'Whenever the fire representing the agonies, sorrows and anguish of separation kindle or gets excited in my heart, these two enemy-like eyes of mine pour water-like tears and douse the flames (thereby preventing me from burning to death and finding liberation and deliverance from my miseries, torments and grief).'

[Sita explains why she has not been able to die due the fire kindled by separation from her Lord and the accompanying sufferings. She continues to cry endlessly. The eyes are compared to the enemy because they pour water in the form of tears that stops her from burning herself to death.]

डहकनि है उजिअरिया निसि नहिं घाम ।
जगत जरत अस लागु मोहि बिनु राम ॥37॥

37-[Alluding to the soothing moonlight, she says—] 'This moonlight that spreads over the world during the night is not cool, comforting and soothing for me. It is rather like the scorching sunlight of the day. The whole world appears to be on fire for me without Sri Ram.'

अब जीवन कै है कपि आस न कोइ ।
कनगुरिया कै मुदरी कंकन होइ ॥38॥

38-[Addressing Hanuman, she says—] 'Hanuman! There is no hope of surviving any longer. (You can see it for yourself that—) The finger-ring has become a bracelet (i.e. I have become so emaciated and withered that my arms and wrists have become extremely lean and thin so much so that even the small finger-ring can easily slide up to my wrists.'

राम सुजस कर चहु जुग होत प्रचार ।
असुरन कहँ लखि लागत जग अँधियार ॥39॥

39-Sita continues—'Sri Ram's glories, invincibility, power, the strength of arms and matchless valour are famous and well known in all the eras of time known as the four Yugs. But seeing the demons and their strength and valour it appears to me that there is darkness all over the world. [That is, though it is true that Lord Ram is famous as an invincible warrior and is famed for his valour and strength of arms, but the demons are no less. See for yourself how the demons have, fearlessly and with impunity, kept me

captive, and the Lord has not been able to do anything till now. This has made me skeptic about the truth of the Lord's powers, strength and valour.]"

The Ashok Grove: Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/1—

बासव-बरुन बिधि-बनतें सुहावनो,
 दसाननको काननु बसंतको सिंगारु सो ।
 समय पुराने पात परत, डरत बातु,
 पालत लालत रति-मारको बिहारु सो ॥
 देखें बर बापिका तड़ाग बागको बनाउ,
 रागबस भो बिरागी पवनकुमारु सो ।
 सीयकी दसा बिलोकि बिटप असोक तर,
 'तुलसी' बिलोक्यो सो तिलोक-सोक-सारु सो ॥ १ ॥

Verse no. 5/1—Tulsidas says that the garden of Ravana (i.e. the Ashok grove) was more pleasant than that of Indra, Varun and Brahma. It appeared to be an ornament for even Basant (the spring season). [Tulsidas means that spring is the time when all the gardens, groves and forests bloom and blossom, but the garden of Ravana was so beautiful and enchanting that it appears that spring season drew its own ability of providing beauty and magnificence to Nature from the garden of Ravana known as the Ashok Grove.]

Old leaves fell when the ripe time came because wind was afraid to enter (intrude) into the garden out of Ravana's fear, and instead, it nourished and looked after it like it were the playing field for Kamdeo and Rati (the God of love and his consort respectively). Seeing excellent ponds, lakes and the layout of the garden, even a great renouncer like Hanuman became enchanted and enthralled. But when he saw the pitiful condition of Sita under the Ashok tree, the same garden appeared to be the core of all sorrows in the three worlds for him.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/2—

माली मेघमाल, बनपाल बिकराल भट,
 नीकें सब काल सीचैं सुधासार नीरके ॥
 मेघनाद तें दुलारो, प्रान तें पियारो बागु,
 अति अनुरागु जियैं जातुधान धीर कें ॥ २
 'तुलसी' सो जानि-सुनि, सीयको दरसु पाइ,
 पैठो बाटिकाँ बजाइ बल रघुबीर कें ॥ ३
 बिद्यमान देखत दसाननको काननु सो
 तहस-नहस कियो साहसी समीर कें ॥ ४ [5/2]

[Here, Tulsidas describes the Ashok grove]

Verse no. 5/2—The clouds are the gardeners (i.e. they water the grove by their rains— this shows it was a big forest-like grove), and the guards are ferocious and huge-bodied. It appeared that the clouds watered the grove with nectar (1). Ravana loved the garden

immensely—more than even his son Meghnad and his own life (2). Tulsidas says that inspite of knowing everything about this garden (that it is privileged place very much liked by the king of demons, and to enter it and ruin it would be like entering a lion's den to challenge him with bare hands), Hanuman fearlessly entered the grove on the strength of Lord Ram (3). In spite of the awesome presence of Ravana and his special protection of this particular garden, the courageous son of the Wind-God (Hanuman) laid it to waste (4). [5/2]

Destruction of the Ashok grove by Hanuman: Ram Charit Manas

सुनहु मातु मोहि अतिसय भूखा । लागि देखि सुंदर फल रूखा ॥7 [5/17/7]
 दोहा- देखि बुद्धि बल निपुन कपि कहेउ जानकी जाहु ।
 रघुपति चरन हृदयँ धरि तात मधुर फल खाहु ॥ [Doha 5/17.]
 चलेउ नाइ सिरु पैठेउ बागा । फल खाएसि तरु तोरैँ लागा ॥1
 रहे तहाँ बहु भट रखवारे । कछु मारेसि कछु जाइ पुकारे ॥2
 नाथ एक आवा कपि भारी । तेहिँ असोक बाटिका उजारी ॥3
 खाएसि फल अरु बिटप उपारे । रच्छक मर्दि मर्दि महि डारे ॥4
 सुनि रावन पठए भट नाना । तिन्हहि देखि गर्जेउ हनुमाना ॥5
 सब रजनीचर कपि संघारे । गए पुकारत कछु अधमारे ॥6 [5/18/1-6]

Hanuman was very hungry, and seeing the ripe fruit-trees, his hunger was stoked, and he asked Sita's permission to eat them (5/17/1). Seeing him expert in wisdom and full of strength and courage, Sita agreed and consented to give him her permission [Doha 5/17].

Hanuman bowed his head, and entering the forest. He started eating the fruits and uprooting the trees (1). The numerous guards were beaten back when they resisted (2). They rushed to Ravana's court and complained, 'Sir, a great monkey has entered the Ashok garden and have laid it to ruin (3)—he has broken the trees, eaten the fruits, and beaten the guards (4).'

Hearing this, Ravana was flabbergasted, and he sent better warriors (to protect the garden and control the intruder), but Hanuman roared on seeing them (5). He killed most of them, while the remaining who survived, escaped (6). [5/18/1-6]

Hanuman's capture and the subsequent burning of Lanka: Ram Charit Manas

सुनि सुत बध लंकेस रिसाना । पठएसि मेघनाद बलवाना ॥1
 मारसि जनि सुत बाँधेसु ताही । देखिअ कपिहि कहाँ कर आही ॥2 [5/19/1-2]
 दोहा- ब्रह्म अस्त्र तेहिँ साँधा कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
 जौं न ब्रह्मसर मानउँ महिमा मिटइ अपार ॥ [Doha 5/19.]
 ब्रह्मबान कपि कहूँ तेहिँ मारा । परतिहुँ बार कटकु संघारा ॥1
 तेहिँ देखा कपि मुरुछित भयऊ । नागपास बाँधेसि लै गयऊ ॥2
 कपि बंधन सुनि निसिचर धाए । कौतुक लागि सभाँ सब आए ॥5 [5/20/1-2, 5]
 सुनि कपि बचन बहुत खिसिआना । बेगि न हरहु मूढ़ कर प्राना ॥5

- सुनत निसाचर मारन धाए । सचिवन्ह सहित बिभीषनु आए ॥6
 नाइ सीस करि बिनय बहूता । नीति बिरोध न मारिअ दूता ॥7
 आन दंड कछु करिअ गोसाँई । सबहीं कहा मंत्र भल भाई ॥8
 सुनत बिहसि बोला दसकंधर । अंग भंग करि पठइअ बंदर ॥9 [5/24/5-9]
- दोहा- कपि के ममता पूँछ पर सबहि कहउँ समुझाइ ।
 तेल बोरि पट बाँधि पुनि पावक देहु लगाइ ॥ [Doha 5/24.]
 जातुधान सुनि रावन बचना । लागे रचै मूढ़ सोइ रचना ॥4
 रहा न नगर बसन घृत तेला । बाढ़ी पूँछ कीन्ह कपि खेला ॥5
 कौतुक कहँ आए पुरबासी । मारहिं चरन करहिं बहु हाँसी ॥6
 बाजहिं ढोल देहिं सब तारी । नगर फेरि पुनि पूँछ प्रजारी ॥7
 पावक जरत देखि हनुमंता । भयउ परम लघुरूप तुरंता ॥8
 निबुकि चढ़ेउ कपि कनक अटारी । भई सभित निसाचर नारी ॥9 [5/25/4-9]
- दोहा- हरि प्रेरित तेहि अवसर चले मरुत उनचास ।
 अट्टहास करि गर्जा कपि बढ़ि लाग अकास ॥ [Doha 5/25.]
 देह बिसाल परम हरुआई । मंदिर तें मंदिर चढ़ धाई ॥1
 जरइ नगर भा लोग बिहाला । झपट लपट बहु कोटि कराला ॥2 [5/26/1-2]

Hearing that his son (Akshaya kumar) has died at the hands of Hanuman (while protecting the Ashok grove on the instructions of his father, Ravana), Ravana was very angry. So he sent Meghnad, the brave, (1) and ordered him to capture the monkey alive so that it can be ascertained from whence he has come (2). [Both Akshaya Kumar and Meghnad [5/19/1-2].

Meghnad fitted his bow with an arrow called 'Brahamastra' (after its patron God Brahma, the creator), and shot it. In order to maintain its sanctity and glory, Hanuman decided to let himself be subdued and captured by this arrow [5/19/0]. But, even while falling, he killed many warriors (1).

Seeing him faint, Meghnad tied him with a rope made of serpents and took him captive to the court of Ravana (2). Hearing that the mischievous monkey has been caught, the citizens of Lanka were awestruck and came to the court out of curiosity to have a glimpse of him (Hanuman) (5) [5/20/1-2, 5].

Hanuman tried in vain to convince Ravana to leave confrontation aside, return Sita to Lord Ram, and make peace. He even accused Ravana of being ill-witted and in the jaws of death. Ravana was so enraged that he ordered his demons to kill the monkey (5). They rushed forward to harm Hanuman, but Ravana's brother Vibhishan entered the court at that instant and intervened (6). He bowed his head and said, 'Oh Lord! It is against rules to kill a messenger (7). Give him some other punishment.' The assembled courtiers agreed (8), and Ravana laughed scornfully and ordered to dismember or mutilate the monkey and send him back (9) [5/24/5-9].

It was suggested that a monkey loves its tail immensely, so as a mockery and insult, it should be burnt using oil on cloth wrapped round the tail [Doha 5/24].

On hearing Ravana's orders, the stupid and dumb-witted demons started making arrangements for carrying out his orders (to burn Hanuman's tail) (4). All the cloth and oil in the city were consumed even as Hanuman began elongating his tail in a playful manner (5). The citizens mocked him and kicked him (6), beat drums and clapped in

derision. The tail snaked around the city (7); and as soon as the fire was lit, Hanuman assumed a miniature form, (as a result of which the tail shrunk in length and width and easily slithered out of the cloth wrappings, leaving the cloth drenched in oil to burn ferociously) (8). Then Hanuman leapt atop the pinnacle of the golden palace, creating panic among the demonesses (9).

At that moment, inspired by the Gods, all the 49 varieties of winds began to blow simultaneously, fanning the flames. Hanuman roared and laughed, and the flames licked sky-wards in a fierce display of fireworks and lighting (Doha 5/25). [Chaupai lines 5/25/4-9, Doha 25]

Though colossus in size, he leapt from building to building with great swiftness and agility (1). The city was up in flames quickly, and the citizens were extremely terrified and at their wits end. Terrible flames of great ferocity burst forth, and horrible cries of panic and fear were heard from all the directions (of the city of Lanka) [5/26/1-2].

उलटि पलटि लंका सब जारी । कूदि परा पुनि सिंधु मझारी ॥ [5/26/8]

The whole of Lanka was burnt from end to end; and then Hanuman leapt into the ocean to douse the burning cloth tied to his tail [5/26/8].

Geetawali: Raag Kanhara: Verse no. 5/12—

रावन ! जु पै राम रन रोषे ।
 को सहि सकै सुरासुर समरथ, विसिष काल-दसननितें चोषे ॥1
 तपबल, भुजबल, कै सनेह-बल सिव-बिरंचि नीकी बिधि तोषे ।
 सो फल राजसमाज-सुवन-जन आपु न नास आपने पोषे ॥2
 तुल्य पिनाक, साहु नृप, त्रिभुवन भट बटोरि सबके बल जोषे ।
 परसुराम से सूर-सिरोमनि पल में भए खेत के धोषे ॥3
 कालिकी बात बालिकी सुधि करि समुझि हिताहित खोलि झरोखे ।
 कह्यो कुमंत्रि को न मानिये, बड़ी हानि, जिय जानि त्रिदोषे ॥4
 जासु प्रसाद जनमि जग पुरुषनि सागर सृजे, खने अरु सोखे ।
 तुलसिदास सो स्वामि न सूझ्यो, नयन बीस मंदिरके-से मोखे ॥5 [5/12]

Verse no. 5/12—Now, in the court of Ravana at Lanka, when Hanuman was presented in a captive state, the latter said, ‘Oh Ravana! If Lord Ram becomes angry and aggressive during the battle, which God or Demon is there who can withstand his arrows which are like the jaws of death itself? (1). You have satisfied Lord Shiva and God Brahma with your austerities, strength and devotion. Now, in all wisdom, do not destroy your kith and kin who you've got as a blessing and a boon from them (Shiva and Brahma), and have nourished and sustained them yourself. [That is, don't do anything which puts them at peril. Do not be the cause of destruction of your own family and kith and kin.] (2).

King Janak had weighed the strength of all the princes in this world against the bow of Lord Shiva and found them inept; even the most courageous and brave Parashuram

became a dud (like a scare-crow in a farmer's field) in front of Lord Ram (a reference to the bow breaking ceremony for Sita's marriage) (3). Even a little while ago, (a few days ago) don't you remember the fate of Bali (the king of Kishkindha who was killed by Lord Ram using a single arrow), and can't you think what is good for you (aren't you aware that the same fate awaits you)? Look! Do not pay heed to sycophants and ill-advised ministers, for you'll come to harm that way because your advisors' wisdom have been eclipsed by the so-called three faults¹ (4).

Oh! He, whose predecessors had been born on earth and created, dug up and oppressed the oceans², if you do not recognise that Lord (Sri Ram) then your 20 eyes are like pot-holes in a building (i.e. are worthless because you cannot see the truth) (5).'
[5/12]

[Note—¹The three faults are the following—Adhibhautik which refers to the faults of the mind and lack of wisdom realated to worldly behaviour and action, Adhyaatmic which relates to one's wisdom in the field of spiritual welfare, and Adhidaivic which relates to Gods and stars when they become angry, antoganistic and malevolent. When the three faults occur simultaneously the creature is brought to ruin because his mind and intellect cannot think properly, rationally, righteously, and for the welfare of the creature.

²The legend has it that the ocean was 'created' by King Priya Vrat, son of Manu and Satrupa. He circumambulated the earth 7 times, creating the 7 oceans made of milk, curd, Ghee, butter-milk, sugarcane juice, salt and wine. The oceans were 'dug-up' by King Sagar's 60,000 sons in search of the horse hidden by God Indra. The ocean was 'consumed' by sage Agastya in three gulps on the strength of Lord Ram's legendary holy name].

{Acting on the ill-thought sycophantic advice of his dumb-witted advisors who said things that pleased their demon king Ravana, instead of being honest and giving an advice that would have been for the good of the kingdom of Lanka, orders were issued to wrap Hanuman's tail in cloth and set it afire. This is what Hanuman was waiting for. As soon as the cloth was lit with fire and oil, he became small in size, thereby easily pulling his tail out of the huge cylindrical tube that the cloth formed when it was wrapped around his thick tail earlier when he had a colossus form. Then he jumped from one place to another in the city, dragging the burning tube of cloth behind him. This started a big fire in Lanka, and the whole city was reduced to cinders.}

The Burning of Lanka: Kavita wali: Verse no. 5/3—

बसन बटोरि बोरि-बोरि तेल तमीचर,
खोरि-खोरि धाड़ आड़ बाँधत लँगूर हैं ।
तैसो कपि कौतुकी डेरात ढीले गात कै-कै,
लातके अघात सहै, जीमें कहै, क्रूर हैं ।।
बाल किलकारी कै-कै, तारी दै-दै गारी देत,
पाछें लागे, बाजत निसान ढोल तूर हैं ।

बालधी बढन लागी, ठौर-ठौर दीन्ही आगी,
बिंधिकी दवारि कैधौ कोटिसत सूर हैं ।।3।।

Verse no. 5/3—The demons rushed along all the lanes and bye-lanes (of the city of Lanka), collected all available cloth, dipped them in oil and wrapped them on Hanuman's tail. Similarly, the playful Hanuman pretends to be afraid and tolerates their kicks and blows with relaxed muscles (i.e. he does not resist), and considers them to be cowards. The children, clapping and laughing in derision, are abusing him and having a merry of a time as they joined the elder demons; and drums, tom-toms and bugles are being sounded (as if a great drama is being staged in the city).

The tail started elongating and the demons ignited it (i.e. they lit the wrapped cloth with fire) randomly at various points which made it appear like the great (forest or wild) fire of the Vindhya mountains, or like one hundred crore (millions of) suns shining simultaneously.

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/4—

लाइ-लाइ आगि भागे बालजाल जहाँ तहाँ,
लघु ह्वै निबुकि गिरि मेरुतें बिसाल भो ।।
कौतुकी कपीसु कूदि कनक-कंगूरौ चढ्यो,
रावन-भवन चढ़ि ठाढ़ो तेहि काल भो ।।2
'तुलसी' विराज्यो ब्योम बालधी पसारि भारी,
देखें हहरात भट, कालु सो कराल भो ।।3
तेजको निधानु मानो कोटिक कृसानु-भानु,
नख बिकराल, मुखु तैसो रिस लाल भो ।।4 [5/4]

Verse no. 5/4—The mischievous children of Lanka ignited the tail of Hanuman and ran away jesting and laughing, and when the cloth wrapped around the tail was fully ablaze Hanuman shrank his body to a miniscule size. The tail slipped out of the wrappings, and once free of his bondage, he assumed a colossal body like that of Mt. Sumeru (1). The playful Hanuman then leapt on the golden pinnacle atop the palace of Ravana (2). Tulsidas says he looked remarkable there with his long tail, flames leaping from it against the sky. Seeing him, even the courageous demons shivered out of fear. Hanuman became ferocious like the God of death and destruction (3). He appeared to be the fountain of energy as if he embodied millions of fires and suns at the same time. His nails looked ferocious, and the face was red with anger (4) [5/4].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/5—

बालधी बिसाल बिकराल, ज्वालजाल मानो
लंक लीलबेको काल रसना पसारी है ।
कैधौ ब्योमबीथिका भरे हैं भूरि धूमकेतु,
बीररस बीर तरवारि सो उघारी है ।।
'तुलसी' सुरेस-चापु, कैधौ दामिनि-कलापु,
कैधौ चली मेरु तें कृसानु-सरि भारी है ।

देखें जातुधान-जातुधानी अकुलानी कहैं,
कानबु उजार्यो, अब नगरु प्रजारिहै ॥5॥

Verse no. 5/5—The huge tail, burning with a terrible ferocity of a fire with leaping flames, resembled the outstretched tongue of Death, eager to gobble up Lanka, or as if a thousand comets have covered the sky, or Bravery, in a personified form, has drawn the sword to kill. Tulsidas wonders whether it is a rainbow, a fount of lightening or a river of fire flowing down from Mt. Sumeru. Seeing all this, the demons and demonesses (female demons) say— ‘He (Hanuman) has already laid the garden (the Ashoka grove) to waste, and now he shall burn the city.’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/6—

जहाँ-तहाँ बुबुक बिलोकि बुबुकारी देत,
जरत निकेत, धावौ, धावौ लागी आगि रे ॥
कहाँ तातु-मातु, भ्रात-भगिनी, भामिनी-भाभी,
ढोटा छोटे छोहरा अभागे भोंडे भागि रे ॥2
हाथी छोरौ, घोरा छोरौ, महिष-वृषभ छोरौ,
छेरी छोरौ, सोवै सो जगावौ, जागि, जागि रे ॥3
‘तुलसी’ बिलोकि अकुलानी जातुधानी कहैं,
बार-बार कह्यौं, पिय ! कपिसों न लागि रे ॥4 [5/6]

Verse no. 5/6—There was a huge tumult in the city as demons and demonesses, seeing the huge blaze and scorching heat (generated by the flames), ran out in panic, yelling—‘Oh run, run for your lives! Houses are burning; everything is on fire (1). Oh you wretched! Where are the parents, brothers and sisters, wives and in-laws, children—where are they? (2) Oh fool! Run, run—hurry, make haste as there is no time left; everything is on fire! Set free the elephants, horses, buffaloes, oxen, goats etc. Those who are asleep, wake them up. Oh wake up, wake up—this is not the time to sleep!’ (3)

Tulsidas says that the wives sternly admonished their demon husbands, saying, ‘We repeatedly told you not to play funny with this monkey, but you all didn't pay heed; now what do we do? (4)’. [5/6]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/7—

देखि ज्वालाजालु, हाहाकारु दसकंध सुनि,
कह्यौ, धरो, धरो, धाए बीर बलवान हैं ।
लिउँ सूल-सेल, पास-परिघ, प्रचंड दंड,
भाजन सनीर, धीर धरें धनु-बान हैं ॥
‘तुलसी’ समिध सौंज, लंक जग्यकुंडु लखि,
जातुधान पुंगीफल जव तिल धान हैं ।
सुवा सो लँगूल, बलमूल प्रतिकूल हबि,

स्वाहा महा हाँकि हाँकि हुनै हनुमान हैं ।। 7 ।।

Verse no. 5/7—Alarmed at the scorching and leaping flames, and the distressed tumult of the citizens, Ravana shouted, ‘Oh! Catch him, catch him!’ Hearing his orders, many strong warriors rushed forward, armed with tridents, spears, lances, strong batons (to beat), snares (to trap the monkey Hanuman) and bows and arrows (to shoot and kill him if necessary). Tulsidas compares the scene to a fire sacrifice (Yagya), saying that Lanka resembled the sacrificial pit, the property was like wood (or fuel), and the demons were nuts, barley, mustard and rice (materials used to offer sacrifice in the fire). Hanuman’s tail is a ladle, strong enemy is the ‘Havi’ (butter, rice, pudding, sweets and sacrificial items offered to the fire as described above), and the high-pitched war-cry of challenge made by Hanuman appears to be the chanting of the Vedic Mantras (scriptural hymns) during the rituals of the fire sacrifice. [5/7]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/8—

गाज्यो कपि गाज ज्यों, बिराज्यो ज्वालजालजुत,
भाजे बीर धीर, अकुलाइ उठ्यो रावनो ।।
धावौ, धावौ, धरौ, सुनि धाए जातुधान धारि,
वारिधारा उलदै जलदु जौन सावनो ।। 2
लपट-झपट झहराने, हहराने बात,
भहराने भट, पर्यो प्रबल परावनो ।। 3
ढकनि ढकेलि, पेलि सचिव चले लै ठेलि,
नाथ ! न चलैगो बलु, अनलु भयावनो ।। 4 [5/8]

Verse no. 5/8—Hanuman looked like a furnace and roared like a thunderbolt; the most courageous and brave among the demons were so scared that they took to their heels, and Ravana, being extremely distressed and very agitated, shouted at the top of his voice—‘Catch him, catch him!’ (1).

At his cajoling and coaxing, the army of demons rushed forward as if the dark rain bearing clouds wished to douse the fire (2), but those warriors were scorched and scalded by the leaping flames and the burning breeze sweeping towards them (3). They ran helter-skelter. Ravana was pushed, shoved and forcefully removed from the site by his ministers, who warned him, ‘Oh Lord! The fire is absolutely ferocious and out of control. We can’t stand against it.’ (4) [5/8].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/9—

बड़ो बिकराल बेष्टु देखि, सुनि सिंघनादु,
उठ्यौ मेघनादु, सबिषाद कहै रावनो ।
बेग जित्यो मारुतु, प्रताप मारतंड कोटि,
कालऊ करालताँ, बड़ाई जित्यो बावनो ।।

‘तुलसी’ सयाने जातुधान पछिताने कहैं,
 जाको ऐसो दूत, सो तो साहेबु अबै आवनो ।
 काहेको कुसल रोषे राम बामदेवहू की,
 बिषम बलीसों बादि बैरको बढ़ावनो ॥ 9 ॥

Verse no. 5/9—Seeing the ferocious and terribly angry countenance of Hanuman, and hearing his chilling war-cry that resounded in every direction, Meghnad stood up. A worried Ravana said, ‘This fellow (Hanuman) has out-smarted wind in speed, millions of suns in splendour, Kaal (death) in ferocity, and Lord Vaaman* in his colossus size.’
 [*Lord Vaaman had measured the entire creation in his three steps.]

Tulsidas says that those demons that had some wisdom left in them, lamented and said, ‘The master, whose servant is so terrible and awesome, is yet to come (say—what will happen then?). One wonders how even Lord Shiva can ever expect to be happy if Lord Ram becomes angry at him? It is futile and unwise to enhance enmity with such a warrior as Hanuman. [In other words, it would have been wiser if our king Ravana had not ordered Hanuman’s tail to be burnt, for then the city would have been spared from being reduced to ashes. It is not wise to make Lord Ram’s messenger an enemy.]’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/10—

पानी!पानी!पानी! सब रानी अकुलानी कहैं,
 जाति हैं परानी, गति जानी गजचालि है ।
 बसन बिसारैं, मनिभूषन सँभारत न,
 आनन सुखाने, कहैं, क्योंहू कोऊ पालिहै ॥
 ‘तुलसी’ मँदोवै मीजि हाथ, धुनि माथ कहैं,
 काहूँ कान कियो न, मैं कह्यौ केतो कालि है ।
 बापुर्न बिभीषन पुकारि बार-बार कह्यौ,
 बानरु बड़ी बलाइ घने घर घालिहै ॥ 10 ॥

Verse no. 5/10—All the queens of Ravana ran hither-thither agitatedly, shouting, ‘Water, water!’ They can be recognised by their elephant-like majestic gait. They had forgotten to put on proper clothes (in a hurry), and neither could they take care of gem-studded ornaments (as they ran in panic, seeking water). Their mouths are parched and they lament woefully, ‘Can any one protect us in some way?’

Tulsidas says that Mandodari (the chief queen) grieves and laments by wringing her hands and beating her head—‘Oh goodness! I tried to reason with my husband Ravana so much yesterday, but no one lent me his ears. Poor Vibhishan had also warned repeatedly that this monkey is a great problem, and he shall ruin many households, but no one paid attention to either of us.’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/14—

हाट-बाट, कोट-ओट, अटनि, अगर, पौरि,
 खोरि-खोरि दौरि-दौरि दीन्ही अति आगि है ॥

आरत पुकारत, सँभारत न कोऊ काहू,
 ब्याकुल जहाँ सो तहाँ लोक चले भागि हैं।।2
 बालधी फिरावै, बार-बार झहरावै, झरें
 बुँदिया-सी लंक पधिलाइ पाग पागिहै।3
 'तुलसी' बिलोकि अकुलानी जातुधानी कहैं,
 चित्रहू के कपि सों निसाचरु न लागिहै।।4 [5/14]

Verse no. 5/14—In this way, Hanuman set to fire the market places, forts, palaces, ramparts and gates, houses, lanes and by-lanes, every nook and corner of the city (1). Everyone is crying in agony, and no one bothers about another; all are running helter-skelter (2). Hanuman shook his tail often, and ambers and sparks of fire flew from it as if he wished to prepare a sweet dish called Bundiya made of small round globules of gram-flour soaked in treacle (molasses) symbolized by the melted-down gold of Lanka (3).

Seeing all this, the demonesses (female demons) said that after witnessing such a horrific scene, the demons would not dare to fight even a dummy monkey in future (4).'

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/24—

हाट-बाट हाटकु पिधिलि चलो घी-सो घनो,
 कनक-कराही लंक तलफति तायसों।।1
 नाना पकवान जातुधान बलवान सब
 पागि पागि ढेरी कीन्ही भलीभाँति भायसों।।2
 पाहुने कृसानु पवमानसों परोसो, हनुमान
 सनमानि कै जेवाए चित-चायसों।3
 'तुलसी' निहारि अरिनारि दै-दै गारि कहैं
 'बावरें सुरारि बैरु कीन्हौ रामरायसों'।।4 [5/24]

Verse no. 5/24—Gold melted and flowed like melted butter (ghee) on the streets in the market places. The city of Lanka appeared to be a huge boiling cauldron of gold (1). The dead demons appeared to be various sweet dishes being fried in it and arranged in heaps (2), and Hanuman was serving his guest (the Fire God), with the help of wind (the Wind God), the most delicious of sweets and snacks, as it were (3). Seeing this, the demonesses are cursing, 'Oh look! This mad Ravana has made Lord Ram an enemy (and wrought this havoc on us) (4).'

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/25—

रावनु सो राजरोगु बाढ़त बिराट-उर,
 दिनु-दिनु बिकल, सकल सुख राँक सो।1
 नाना उपचार करि हारे सुर, सिद्ध, मुनि,
 होत न बिसोक, औत पावै न मनाक सो।।2

रामकी रजाइतें रसाइनी समीरसूनु
 उतरि पयोधि पार सोधि सरवाक सो । 3
 जातुधान-बुट पुटपाक लंक-जातरूप-
 रतन जतन जारि कियो है मृगांक-सो । 4 [5/25]

Verse no. 5/25—Ravana was like tuberculosis that was increasing by each passing day in the chest of Viraat-Purush (the cosmic form of the Supreme God), due to which He was gradually getting emaciated and was being deprived of all peace and happiness (1). The Gods, saints and mystics had tried all sorts of medicines and had failed to cure or relieve Him the slightest (2). Then, on the orders of Lord Ram, the Aurvedic Doctor (a doctor who uses herbs as medicines) called Hanuman, crossed the ocean and made a special chemical remedy (a concoction) made up of the prey (Lanka), the herbs (the demons) and ashes and chemicals (of burnt gold and jewels which adorned the city) in order to cure the disease of the Viraat-Purush (4).

[Note—The metaphors are obvious. The Supreme Lord was feeling uneasy because of the tyranny that the cruel demon Ravana had unleashed on this world. The pain of the creatures was tormenting the Lord who could not bear it any longer. All methods adopted by the Gods and sages to control Ravana failed, so the Lord decided to call in the help of his trouble-shooter named Hanuman and asked him to do something. Hanuman went off to Lanka and made a final attempt to teach Ravana a lesson by punishing him ruthlessly so that he might relent and stop his reckless behaviour. By burning Lanka Hanuman sought to tell Ravana that he must realise the sort of pain, agony and horror he and his demons are causing to the rest of the helpless population in this world simply because they are strong and powerful and no one has the guts and the strength to oppose them. Now that he has got a first-hand taste of his own medicine, the Lord expected that Ravana would understand the pain of others, and stop his cruel actions forthwith.]

{After completely burning Lanka to ashes, Hanuman jumped in the ocean to douse the burning cloth that he had been dragging behind him, and also to refresh himself by taking a cool bath in the water of the ocean. Then he met Sita once again before making his exit from Lanka to report back to Lord Ram in Kishkindha.}

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/14—

तौलों, मातु ! आपु नीके रहिबो ।
 जौलौं हौं ल्यावौं रघुबीरहि, दिन दस और दुसह दुख सहिबो ।।1
 सोखिकै, खेतकै, बाँधि सेतु करि उतरिबो उदधि, न बोहित चहिबो ।
 प्रबल दनुज-दल दलि पल आध में, जीवत दुरित दसानन गहिबो ।।2
 बैरिबुंद-बिधवा-बनितनिको देखिबो बारि-बिलोचन बहिबो ।
 सानुज सेनसमेत खामिपद निरखि परम मुद मंगल लहिबो ।।3

लंक-दाह उर आनि मानिबो साँचु राम-सेवक को कहिबो।
तुलसी प्रभु सुर सुजस गाइहैं, मिटि जैहै सबको सोचु-दव दहिबो ।।4 [5/14]

Verse no. 5/14—At the time of departure, Hanuman said to Sita, ‘Oh Mother! Take care of your self till the time I bring Lord Ram here. Tolerate this agony for another 10 days (1). We have to cross the ocean either by drying it, filling it, or constructing a bridge over it. We do not need a boat or a ship. Then our great army will destroy the enemy's army in half a second (literally; meaning ‘very soon’) and catch hold of Ravana alive (2). You shall watch the widows of the enemy shed tears, and shall derive immense joy seeing Sri Ram and Laxman with their army (3). Seeing what I've done to Lanka, you should be reassured and believe me.’

Tulsidas says that soon the time would come for the Gods to sing the glory of Lord Ram and for the end of their burning in the fire of sorrows (inflicted upon them by the demons) (4) [5/14]

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/15—

कपिके चलत सियको मनु गहबरि आयो।
पुलक सिथिल भयो सरीर, नीर नयनन्हि छायो॥ 1॥
कहन चह्यो सँदेस, नहि कह्यो, पियके जिय की जानि हृदय दुसह दुख
दुरायो।
देखि दसा ब्याकुल हरीस, ग्रीष्मके पथिक ज्यों धरनि तरनि—तायो॥ 2॥
मीचतें नीच लगी अमरता, छलको न बलको निरखि थल परुष प्रेम पायो।
कै प्रबोध मातु—प्रीतिसों असीस दीन्हैं हैहै तिहारोई मनभायो॥ 3॥
करुना—कोप—लाज—भय—भरो कियो गौन, मौन ही चरन कमल सीस नायो।
यह सनेह—सरबस समौ, तुलसी रसना रूखी, ताही तें परत गायो॥ 4॥

Verse no. 5/15—As soon as Hanuman left, Sita's heart overflowed (was overwhelmed) with emotions. Her body was thrilled and benumbed, while tears welled up in her eyes (1).

She wanted to send a message (for Sri Ram), but considering the mental condition of her husband, she decided to hold back her insurmountable sorrows and profound torments inside her heart (i.e. she did not want to reveal them as it would only add to his miseries). Seeing her woeful and agitated condition, torn in a dilemma, as it were, the king of monkeys (Hanuman) became emotionally upset, anguished, agitated and extremely tormented like a pedestrian gets horrified when he has to walk on the ground which is heated by a scorching sun in the summer month. [The ground under the feet becomes so hot that it literally burns one's soles, and walking barefoot is an exercise in torture and horror. Blisters form and one gets immensely agitated and woeful.] (2).

He regretted at his eternal life which he considered worse than death. [Hanuman had a boon of a long, eternal life, and because of it he wouldn't die even if he wanted to. So, he was so remorseful that he would have preferred death to being alive and be a witness to such a woeful spectacle without being able to do anything about it, or being

unable to avenge Sita's torments inflicted upon her by Ravana inspite of being capable of doing it. This frustration—at being tied down because of Sri Ram's constraining orders—added to his despair and woes.]

Seeing that there was no scope for employing cunning, trickery and use of force or strength of arms, he felt that his love (devotion, loyalty to Sri Ram) was too much (i.e. too difficult to sustain or uphold) for him. [He felt that had it not been for the danger of violating established norms of devotion, which include following the Lord's orders without asking questions and to do as you are told, he would have crushed the demons like nine pins and would have taken Sita back.]

Thence, Sita consoled him affectionately like a mother and blessed him saying 'What you have in your mind will be done. (But, wait for the right moment).'

[This almost sealed the fate of the demons, for Hanuman had wished that he would crush the demon army single handedly and avenge Sita's agonies. This is perhaps the reason why the entire credit for demolishing the enemy was given to Hanuman in the Sundar and Lanka Kands of Kavitawali. There, even Sri Ram was spellbound and astonished at the valour and marvelous deeds of Hanuman in the battle ground, so much so that he expressed this in clear terms to Laxman. Refer: Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 40.] (3).

Thereafter, Hanuman silently bowed his head at the feet of Sita (to pay obeisance) and full of compassion and pity (at Sita), anger and indignation (at Ravana), shame and regret (at himself, that he could not avenge his anger) and fear (that Sri Ram would become annoyed because he had burnt the city of Lanka without his permission), he made his exit from there. Tulsidas admonishes himself by saying that he is so insensitive and emotionless that is able to describe those touching moments of Hanuman taking his leave from Sita. (It was a poignant moment, and Sita would be left alone to face her fate till the Lord comes to rescue her.)

[Much is left here on imagination. Sita's last and only channel of communicating with Sri Ram was gone. The future was uncertain. The condition can be compared to a person marooned on a desolate island with cannibals all around. Then a ray of hope comes as a spy sent by the king of the realm to locate that person, and the spy also leaves with promise of coming back with reinforcements to rescue him. What if the reinforcements so promised do not materialise? There are hordes of imponderables, a sea of uncertainties. One can well visualise the state of that person's mind and physical bearing. The tortures at the hands of the enemy are bound to increase—because the spy was revealed and caught red handed, the city was burnt by him, the impotence and incompetence of the demons in the face of Sri Ram's single messenger had come to the fore. There was the looming danger of a calamitous war. Indeed, Sita must have been petrified with fear! This verse highlights Sita's anguish and her indomitable spirit.] (4)."

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/26—

जारि-बारि, कै बिधूम, बारिधि बुताइ लूम,
नाइ माथो पगनि, भो ठाढ़ो कर जोरि कै ।।
मातु ! कृपा कीजै, सहिदानी दीजै, सुनि सीय
दीन्ही है असीस चारु चूड़ामनि छोरि कै ।।2
कहा कहौ तात ! देखे जात ज्यों बिहात दिन,

बड़ी अवलंब ही, सो चले तुम्ह तोरि कै॥३
 'तुलसी' सनीर नैन, नेहसो सिथिल बैन,
 बिकल बिलोकि कपि कहत निहोरि कै॥४ [5/26]

Verse no. 5/26—After burning Lanka and making it luster-less and life-less, Hanuman doused his burning tail by jumping into the ocean, and then stood before Sita with folded hands and palms touching each other as a token of great respect (1)—‘Oh Mother! Please be kind to give me a token (which I can take back to Lord Ram).’

Hearing this, Sita blessed him and detaching the jewel worn in her hairs, gave it to him, and said (2)—‘Son, what can I tell you! How I am passing my days, you've seen for yourself. Your presence was a great reassurance and source of courage for me, but you speak of departing (3).’

Tulsidas says tears welled-up in her eyes and the voice choked. Seeing her pitiful condition, Hanuman consoled her in these words (4) [5/26].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/27—

‘दिवस छ-सात जात जानिबे न, मातु ! धरु धीर, अरि-अंतकी अवधि रहि थोरिकै ॥१
 बारिधि बाँधाइ सेतु ऐहैं भानुकुलकेतु सानुज कुसल कपिकटक बटोरि कै’ ॥२
 बचन बिनीत कहि, सीताको प्रबोधु करि, ‘तुलसी’ त्रिकूट चढ़ि कहत डफोरि कै ॥३
 ‘जै जै जानकीस दससीस-करि-केसरी’ कपीसु कूद्यो बात-घात उदधि हलोरि कै ॥४ [5/27]

Verse no. 5/27—‘Mother! Have patience! Bear for another 6-7 days. The end of the enemy is near; very little time is left (1). Alongwith his brother (Laxman) and army (of monkeys) Lord Ram will construct a bridge across the ocean and come here soon (2).’ Thus consoling Sita, bowing his head to her (and taking her leave), he jumped above Mt. Trikoot and shouted at the top of his voice (3), "Glory to Lord Ram who is like a lion as opposed to Ravana who is like an elephant."

Saying this, Hanuman leapt across the ocean, and the turbulence caused in the air due to this created waves in the ocean below (4). [5/27]

{Having taken leave from Sita, Hanuman leapt back across the ocean to arrive on this side where his companions had been eagerly waiting for him.}

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/28—

साहसी समीरसूनु नीरनिधि लंघि लखि
 लंक सिद्धपीठु निसि जागो है मसानु सो ।
 ‘तुलसी’ बिलोकि महासाहसु प्रसन्न भई
 देवी सीय-सारिखी, दियो है बरदानु सो ॥
 बाटिका उजारि, अछधारि मारि, जारि गढु,
 भानुकुलभानुको प्रतापभानु-भानु-सो ।

करत बिसोक लोक-कोकनद, कोक कपि,
कहै जामवंत, आयो, आयो हनुमानु सो ॥28॥

Verse no. 5/28—The bear king Jamvant said—‘The brave son of the Wind-God had leapt across the ocean and treated Lanka as a ‘Sidha Peeth’ (a specially blessed place which can endow success in any venture, particularly related to spiritualism). He therefore had done mystical tantrik rituals as done in a cremation ground during the preceding night (i.e. he had burnt the city during the night). [In occult forms of worship of the goddess of death, the worshipper uses the cremation ground for his rituals. Here, the metaphor is employed to imply that Hanuman had burnt Lanka in a ritualistic manner, systematically and formally.]

Seeing his immense courage and valour, the Goddess-like Sita became very pleased and blessed him with a boon. Having ruined the garden (Ashok grove), slaying the army of Akshay Kumar and then burning Lanka, Hanuman has returned to us. He has removed the sorrows of this lotus-like world and Chakravak-like monkeys by assuming the form of the rays of the sun (daylight) that symbolizes the astounding glory and majesty of Lord Ram who himself is like a sun of the Solar race¹. Look, he has come back, he has come back!!’ [Chakravaks=ruddy goose]. [5/28]

[Note—¹Lord Ram was born in the Solar race. The lotus flower opens up during the day time and the ruddy goose also wakes up at dawn. In this stanza, Hanuman is compared to the light of the sun in as much as it is he who acted as the flag-bearer of Lord Ram’s fame. Had it not been for Hanuman, neither would Sita have been found nor would the war won by Ram. Just like the rays of the sun eliminating darkness from all corners of the earth, arrival of Hanuman removed the pall of gloom and the scepter of disaster that loomed over the monkeys on this side of the ocean as they waited most eagerly looking up into the sky in the south direction as Hanuman flew in.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/29—

गगन निहारि, किलकारी भारी सुनि,
हनुमान पहिचानि भए सानँद सचेत हैं।
बूझत जहाज बच्यो पथिकसमाजु, मानो
आजु जाए जानि सब अंकमाल देत हैं ॥
‘जै जै जानकीस, जै जै लखन-कपीस’ कहि,
कूँदै कपि कौतुकी नटत रेत-रेत हैं।
अंगदु मयंदु नलु नील बलसील महा
बालधी फिरावैं, मुख नाना गति लेत हैं ॥29॥

Verse no. 5/29—Hearing the joyful and shrill cry of Hanuman, all the assembled bears and monkeys (on this side of the ocean) looked skywards, and recognizing that he was Hanuman, they all became exuberant, exceedingly happy and euphoric as if a ship, along

with its crew and passengers, has just escaped being sunk. They embraced each other in ecstasy as if they had been re-born.

Shouting 'Glory to the Lord of Janki (i.e. Ram)! Glory to Laxman! Glory to Sugriv!' all those monkeys and bears jumped gleefully and danced merrily on the sand of the ocean shore. Most valiant among them—Angad, Mayand, Neel, Nal—twisted and waved their large tails and happily made funny faces at each other. [5/29]

Ram Charit Manas :

दोहा- पूँछ बुझाइ खोइ श्रम धरि लघु रूप बहोरि ।
जनकसुता के आगें ठाढ़ भयउ कर जोरि ॥ [Doha 5/26.]
मातु मोहि दीजे कछु चीन्हा । जैसे रघुनायक मोहि दीन्हा ॥1
चूड़ामनि उतारि तब दयऊ । हरष समेत पवनसुत लयऊ ॥2 [5/27/1-2]

Having thus burnt Lanka to ashes, Hanuman jumped into the ocean and doused his burning tail, relieved his fatigue and thereafter stood with folded hands before Sita [5/26/0]. 'Mother, please give me some token like Lord Ram had given me for the purpose of proof of my meeting you (1).'

Sita gave him the jewel she had worn on her head (Chuda Mani), and Hanuman accepted it gladly (2) [5/27/1-2].

दोहा- जनकसुतहि समुझाइ करि बहु बिधि धीरजु दीन्ह ।
चरन कमल सिरु कपि गवनु राम पहिं कीन्ह ॥ [Doha 5/27.]
चलत महाधुनि गर्जेसि भारी । गर्भ स्रवहिं सुनि निसिचर नारी ॥1
नाधि सिंधु एहि पारहि आवा । सबद किलिकिला कपिन्ह सुनावा ॥2 [5/28/1-2]

Hanuman consoled her in various ways, and bowing his head at her feet, he departed immediately to meet Lord Ram [5/27/0]. As he leapt, he roared so wildly that the pregnant wives of demons miscarried (1). He crossed the ocean and reached the other side, and was greeted by his fellow companions who were eagerly waiting for him with a shrill cry of joy (2) [5/28/1-2].

चले हरषि रघुनायक पासा । पूँछत कहत नवल इतिहासा ॥ [5/28/6]
पूँछी कुसल कुसल पद देखी । राम कृपाँ भा काजु बिसेषी ॥4
नाथ काजु कीन्हेउ हनुमाना । राखे सकल कपिन्ह के प्राणा ॥5
सुनि सुग्रीव बहुरि तेहि मिलेऊ । कपिन्ह सहित रघुपति पहिं चलेऊ ॥6
राम कपिन्ह जब आवत देखा । किएँ काजु मन हरष बिसेषा ॥7
फटिक सिला बैठे द्रौ भाई । परे सकल कपि चरनन्ह जाई ॥8 [5/29/4-8]
दोहा- प्रीति सहित सब भेटे रघुपति करुना पुंज ।
पूँछी कुसल नाथ अब कुसल देखि पद कंज ॥ [Doha 5/29.]

प्रभु की कृपा भयउ सबु काजू । जन्म हमार सुफल भा आजू ॥4 [5/30/4]
चलत मोहि चूड़ामनि दीन्ही । रघुपति हृदयँ लाइ सोइ लीन्ही ॥ [5/31/1]

All the monkeys and bears then proceeded towards Lord Ram, all the while exchanging the latest news of events [5/28/6]. Sugriv welcomed them and asked of their welfare. They replied, 'All is good on seeing your feet. By the grace of Lord Ram, the work has been accomplished (4). Lord, the work has been done by Hanuman, and he has saved our lives (5) : Hearing this, Sugriv met Hanuman once again and they all proceeded to meet Lord Ram (6). When Ram, who was sitting on a slab of stone, saw them approaching, he guessed that they had done their assigned task from the joyous mood of the group, who fell at his feet in reverance (7-8). [5/29/4-8].

Lord Ram embraced all of them with affection and asked about their welfare. They replied, 'All is well with us, now that we have seen your holy (lotus) feet [Doha 5/29]. By your grace, all the work is done with remarkable success and we are very lucky and fortunate [5/30/4].'

Then Hanuman gave Lord Ram the head-jewel (Chuda Mani) which he had brought as a token from Sita, which was accepted by the Lord who clasped it to his bosom as a sign of remembrance of Sita and affection for her [5/31/1].

Geetawali: Raag Basant: Verse no. 5/16—

रघुपति ! देखो आयो हनूमंत । लंकेस-नगर खेल्यो बसंत ॥1
श्रीराम-काजहित सुदिन सोधि । साथी प्रबोधि लाँध्यो पयोधि ॥2
सिय पाँय पूजि, आसिषा पाइ । फल अमिय सरिस खायो अघाइ ॥3
कानन दलि, होरी रचि बनाइ । हठि तेल बसन बालधि बैँधाइ ॥4
लिए ढोल चले सँग लोग लागि । बरजोर दई चहुँ ओर आगि ॥5
आखत आहुति किये जातुधान । लखि लपट भभरि भागे बिमान ॥6
नभतल कौतुक, लंका बिलाप । परिनाम पचहिं पातकी पाप ॥7
हनुमान-हाँक सुनि बरषि फूल । सुर बार-बार बरनहिं लँगूर ॥8
भरि भुवन सकल कल्यान-धूम । पुर जारि-बारिनिधि बोरि लूम ॥9
जानकी तोषि पोषेउ प्रताप । जय पवन सुवन दलि दुअन-दाप ॥10
नाचहिं, कूदहिं कपि करि विनोद । पीवत मधु मधुबन मगन मोद ॥11
यों कहत लषन गहे पाँय आइ । मनि सहित मुदित भेंट्यो उठाइ ॥12
लगे सजन सेन, भयो हिय हुलास । जय जय जस गावत तुलसिदास ॥13 [5/16]

Verse no. 5/16—Hearing the news of Hanuman's successful return from Lanka, Laxman said to Ram, 'Lord! See, Hanuman has come back. He has literally played Holi¹ in Lanka (1). Fixing an auspicious day for your work, he had assured his companions and leapt across the ocean (2). There he worshipped Sita's holy feet and ate his full of the sweet fruits in the Ashok grove (3). Then he lay waste that garden and prepared for playing a symbolic form of Holi, and respectfully urged the demons to wrap his tail with cloth

soaked in oil (4). People mocked him and beat drums before he set fire in all the four directions (corners) of the city (5). He offered the demons as sacrifice in the fire; seeing its leaping flames, even the chariots of Gods escaped from the site (6). At that moment, there was a lot of wonder and marvel amongst the Gods in the sky and wailing amongst the demons; a sinner is at last burnt in his own sins (7) Hearing his roar, the God's repeatedly showered flowers and praised his tail (8). In this way, spreading the good news everywhere, burning to ashes the city of Lanka, he jumped in the ocean to douse his tail and consoled Sita, thereby reinforcing your glory. Hence, glory to Hanuman who is the destroyer of false pride of all enemies (9-10). At present, he and his companions are enjoying themselves on their success by drinking honey in the Forest of Honey (Madhu Van) (11).'

While Laxman was talking with Lord Ram, Hanuman came and clasped his feet, and Lord Ram embraced him along with the token jewel Hanuman had brought from Sita (12). All were very happy on Hanuman's return and started to prepare the army (for the assault); Tulsidas also joins them in singing the glories of Lord Ram at that auspicious moment (13). [5/16]

[Note—¹Holi—It is a festival of colours celebrated in the Basant season which falls roughly in February-March. It is related to the story of Prahalad, a child devotee of Lord Vishnu whose father was a demon named Hiranyakashipu. The child was put to great torture by his demon father so that he stops worshipping Lord Vishnu. The demon had attempted to get him burnt alive on a fire but Prahalad survived unscathed. In the night a fire is lit and rituals performed to commemorate that event. On the next day coloured water and powder is used to celebrate. It is also a festival to honour the spirit of universal brotherhood as even strangers are welcome to join and celebrate. The colour removes all distinction of caste and creed, and the entire mass of humanity looks like one big sea of colour. The spring season also heralds flowers and trees of myriad colours, and this is metaphorically depicted by playing with colours on the streets and in the homes.

In the present case, Holi is cited with reference to the burning of Lanka because the city was burnt to ashes while Sita and Vibhishan's residence remained unscathed just like Prahalad escaped from the fire in which his aunt was burnt.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/30—

आयो हनुमान, प्रानहेतु अंकमाल देत,
लेत पगधूरि एक, चूमत लँगूल हैं ।।1
एक बूझैं बार-बार, सीय-समाचार, कहैं
पवनकुमार, भो बिगतश्रम-सूल हैं ।।2
एक भूखे जानि, आगें आनैं कंद-मूल-फल,
एक पूजैं बाहु बलमूल तोरि फूल हैं ।।3
एक कहैं 'तुलसी' सकल सिधि ताकें, जाकें

कृपा-पाथनाथ सीतानाथ सानुकूल हैं ।।4 [5/30]

Verse no. 5/30—On his landing on this side of the ocean, the monkeys regarded him as their saviour, and some embraced him, while others took the dust of his feet, or kissed his tail (1). Some asked the news of Sita, and narrating it, it appeared the tiredness of Hanuman vanished (i.e. he felt exhilarated and joyful on telling the good news to them) (2). Some of his companion brought bulbs, roots and fruits for him, thinking that he was hungry; still others adorned his arms with flowers and showered adulations on them (3). Some said that one on whom Lord Ram has become benign and favourable can accomplish all the tasks in this world (4) [5/30].

{The party of jubilant monkeys and bears came to the Rishyamook Mountain where Lord Ram waited with Laxman and Sugriv for the news.}

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/31—

सीयको सनेहु, सीलु, कथा तथा लंकाकी
 कहत चले चायसों, सिरानो पथु छनमें ।
 कह्यो जुबराज बोलि बानरसमाजु, आजु
 खाहु फल, सुनि पेलि पैठे मधुबनमें ।।
 मारे बागवान, ते पुकारत देवान गे,
 'उजारे बाग अंगद' देखाए घाय तनमें ।
 कहै कपिराजु, करि काजु आए कीस, तुल-
 सीसकी सपथ महामोदु मेरे मनमें ।।31 ।।

Verse no. 5/31—Then they started to move towards Kishkindha from the shore of the ocean, all the while narrating and listening to the stories of Sita's devotion, affections, pure character and pious nature vis-à-vis her sorrowful surroundings and torments she was undergoing. As a result, the distance was covered soon (without them feeling tired). Reaching Kishkindha, Angad summoned all the monkeys and said, 'Today, all of you eat fruits to your heart's content!'

Hearing his orders, all the monkeys forcefully entered Madhuvan (i.e. a garden of sweet fruit trees laden with honey). Those gardeners, who were beaten by excited monkeys, ran to the court (of Sugriv) and complained. Showing him (Sugriv) their wounds they informed him that Angad had reduced the garden to waste. At this Sugriv exclaimed, 'In the name of the Lord of Tulsi (i.e. Sri Ram), it appears that the monkeys have completed the assigned task. Today my mind is feeling extremely happy (which is a good omen)!'

{When they reached Lord Ram, Hanuman bowed his head in respect to the Lord and narrated the soulful condition of Sita to him. Let us sample three verses from Geetawali to see the intensity and poignancy of the narration of Sita's woes.}

Geetawali: Raag Jaitsree: Verse no. 5/17—

सुनहु राम बिश्रामधाम हरि ! जनकसुता अति बिपति जैसे सहति ।
 'हे सौमित्रि—बंधु करुनानिधि !' मन महुँ रटति, प्रगट नहिं कहति ॥ 1 ॥
 निजपद—जलज बिलोकि सोकरत नयननि बारि रहत न एक छन ।
 मनहु नील नीरज ससि—संभव रबि—बियोग दोउ स्रवत सुधाकन ॥ 2 ॥
 बहु राच्छसी सहित तरुके तर तुम्हरे बिरह निज जनम बिगोवति ।
 मनहु दुष्ट इंद्रिय संकट महुँ बुद्धि बिबेक उदय मगु जोवति ॥ 3 ॥
 सुनि कपि बचन बिचारि हृदय हरि अनपायनी सदा सो एक मन ।
 तुलसिदास सुख—सुखातीत हरि सोच करत मानहु प्राकृत जन ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 5/17—[Hanuman reported—] ‘Oh Sri Ram, Oh Hari (another name for Lord Vishnu), you are an abode or treasury of bliss! Listen to the way Sita is coping with extreme sorrows and insurmountable torments and anguish. She does not overtly say anything about her anguish and tribulations, arising out of separation from you. Instead of it, she consistently mutters the words ‘Oh brother of Laxman! Oh the merciful Lord who is compassionate and kind!’ [In the Hindu tradition, a wife is not supposed to take the first name of her husband. That is why Sita remembered Sri Ram, but pronounced his name indirectly by referring to him as ‘Lord’, while calling Laxman by his name.] (1).

She constantly stares intently at her lotus-like feet while the tears from her sorrowful eyes do not stop even for a moment as if the two blue lotuses, which have emerged from the moon, incessantly drip drops of nectar because of the agony of separation from the sun. [Here, the moon is Sita's beautiful face, the blue lotus flowers are her eyes; the sun is Sri Ram and the drops of nectar which are dripping are the flow of tears from her eyes. As is evident, a lotus loves the sun, but since it is trapped inside the moon, it cannot face or see its beloved sun, for the sun and the moon do not rise together but are slotted for the day and night respectively.] (2).

Accompanied by numerous demonesses and submerged in the anguish of your separation, she passes her days most remorsefully under a tree as if the intellect, trapped amongst the wicked sense organs is awaiting the rising of wisdom (to liberate her from their shackles) (3).’

Hearing the words (i.e. narration of Sita's miserable, wretched condition) from Hanuman, the Lord determined in his heart that Sita has my eternal, stable and pure devotion firmly entrenched (rooted, established) in her heart. Tulsidas says that thinking thus, Sri Hari (Ram) began lamenting and grieving, though he is beyond (unaffected by, or equanimous under both) happiness and distress, joys and sorrows.

[By using the word Hari, Tulsidas wishes to emphasis that we should not be misled by seeing Sri Ram wailing for a woman like an ordinary man. This is part of the play he has to act—because the Lord has assumed a human form. Would it not look highly incongruous and untenable if he laughs and shows that he cares not a dime about Sita because he is the Lord of all creation, and as such, worldly emotions do not affect him? A good actor is one who plays the path to the hilt, without faltering. But once out of

the play, he regains his composure, becomes his former self. This will answer the skeptics who say that Ram was infatuated by a woman.] (4).”

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 5/18—

रघुकुलतिलक ! बियोग तिहारे ।
 मैं देखी जब जाइ जानकी, मनहु बिरह—मूरति मन मारे ॥ १ ॥
 चित्र—से नयन अरु गढ़ेसे चरन—कर, मढ़े—से स्रवन, नहि सुनति पुकारे ।
 रसना रटति नाम, कर सिर चिर रहै, नित निजपद—कमल निहारे ॥ २ ॥
 दरसन—आस—लालसा मन महुँ राखे प्रभु—ध्यान प्रान—रखवारे ।
 तुलसिदास पूजति त्रिजटा नीके रावरे गुन—गन—सुमन सँवारे ॥ ३ ॥

Verse no. 5/18—‘Oh the most exalted Lord in king Raghu's race (‘Raghu-kul-tilak’—i.e. Lord Ram)! When I first went and saw Sita, she looked so pathetic, tormented and miserable by the agony of your separation that she resembled ‘Separation and Loss’ personified sitting in the form of a uncared for and neglected statue to me (1).

[Describing her state, he goes on—] Her eyes were immobile like that of a portrait, the limbs (hand and feet) appeared to be moulded (sculpted or cast in a fixed position), while the ears too appeared to be chiseled out from a stone. Hence (as a result of it), she did not listen (respond) even when called out. She chants your name incessantly; the hands pensively support her head, while the eyes are constantly transfixed at her own lotus-like feet (2).

She has a great yearning to have your Darshan [divine and holy viewing]. Hence (in order to prevent the exit of her soul from her body), she has made her ‘concentration’ as her guard to keep vigil on her soul.’ [She concentrates on your name, on your glories, on your divine form, on your activities and the hope of meeting you once again. This acts as a guard against her soul from leaving her body.]

Tulsidas says that, further, it is also true that the demoness Trijata worships her with the symbolic flowers that represent Lord Ram’s glories, virtues, fame and majesty. [Trijata constantly reminds Sita about the Lord's name and glories. She keeps Sita’s hopes alive by reminding her of Lord’s great powers and strength. She is the only one who supports Sita in the otherwise desolate, hostile and bleak surroundings at Lanka.] (3).”

Geetawali: Raag Jaitsree: Verse no. 5/20—

तुम्हरे बिरह भई गति जौन ।
 चित दै सुनहु, राम करुनानिधि ! जानौं कछु, पै सकौं कहि हौं न ॥ १ ॥
 लोचन—नीर कृपिनके धन ज्यों रहत निरंतर लोचनन कोन ।
 ‘हा’ धुनि—खगी लाज—पिंजरी महुँ राखि हिये बड़े बधिक हठि मौन ॥ २ ॥
 जेहि बाटिका बसति, तहुँ खग—मृग तजि—तजि भजे पुरातन भौन ।
 स्वास—समीर भेंट भइ भोरेहु, तेहि मग पगु न धर्यो तिहुँ पौन ॥ ३ ॥
 तुलसिदास प्रभु ! दसा सीयकी मुख करि कहत होति अति गौन ।

दीजै दरस, दूरि कीजै दुख, हौ तुम्ह आरत—आरति दौन ॥ 4 ॥

Verse no. 5/20—‘Oh Sri Ram, the abode of mercy and compassion! Listen carefully at the (physical and mental) state of Sita as a consequence of your separation. I am aware of it a bit, but I cannot (fully) narrate (describe) it (1).

The tears in her eyes always remain at its corner like the wealth of a miser. [A miser does not part with his money; he hides them somewhere. Likewise, the tears are not shed by the eyes; Sita makes her best effort to conceal them.] A mighty hunter representing ‘silence’ has forcibly caught hold of a bird called ‘Alas’ (i.e. the sound of lamentation, woes, anguish and sorrows), trapped it in a cage of shame and hesitation, and tucked it away in his heart. [Hence, that sound of moaning—Alas, Ah etc.—remains muted and cannot come out or be heard openly. In other words, Sita sighs silently and has been overcome with hopelessness and haplessness. She is distraught and resigned to her ill-fate. She is counting her days and waiting for death to relieve her of her miseries.] (2).

In the garden where she lives, all the birds and animals have abandoned their traditional homes (i.e. they have left the Ashok grove and fled from there because of the heat generated by the fire of Sita's sorrows and miseries), and the wind—which is usually cool, soft and fragrant—does not step in that direction if it happens to come in contact with her breath even once (because it fears getting heated, become uncomfortable and foul) (3).

Oh Tulsidas' Lord! Trying to describe Sita's sorrows and tribulations with this mouth seems to make them negligible or inconsequential because words can't capture the poignancy of the situation. Hence, now you should give her your Darshan (i.e. present yourself of in front of her) and remove the cause of all her miseries and agonies because you are the vanquisher of the sorrows, anguish, miseries and tribulations of the meek, humble, lowly, hapless and helpless ones (4).”

The Barvai Ramayan summarises the message that Hanuman gave to Lord about Sita in its verse nos. 40-41 as follows—

सिय बियोग दुख केहि बिधि कहउँ बखानि ।
फूल बान ते मनसिज बेधत आनि ॥ 40 ॥

40-[Upon his return to Kishkindha, Hanuman reported to Lord Ram and described the misery of Sita as follows—] 'How can I describe the anguish, sorrow, troubles and tribulations of Sita?

Kamdeo constantly pierces her with arrows made of flowers (i.e. she is consistently suffering from the agonies that arise from her separation from you).'
[Kamdeo is the patron god of love.]

सरद चाँदनी सँचरत चहुँ दिसि आनि ।
बिधुहि जोरि कर बिनवति कुलगुरु जानि ॥ 41 ॥

41-'When the moonlight of a winter's full moon spreads in all the directions, then it appears like the scorching light of the mid-day sun for her. Thinking that the moon is like the patron god of her family (i.e. she begins to treat the moon as the 'sun'), she prays to it and beseeches it to somehow extricate her from her ordeals, and allow her freedom from her wretched and miserable condition by letting her burn herself to death).' [In this context, refer verse nos. 37.]

[Lord Ram was born in the 'solar race'. Hence, the 'sun' is treated as the patron god of his family. Sita is so dazed and confused that she begins to mix things up—thinking that the moon is the sun. Even the soothing moonlight is intolerable for her. It reminds her of the scorching light of the sun.]

{After Hanuman had left Lanka, Sita felt lonely and dejected. A demoness named Trijata was deputed by Ravana to keep an eye on Sita. Trijata was a noble soul despite of her body being that of a demoness. She felt deeply sympathetic towards Sita and felt pity for her. She was Sita's only constant companion all through her confinement in Lanka. By and by the two became friends, and Sita used to confide in her all her emotions and sentiments. So Sita told her in a very poignant mood that she is very depressed and wonders whether she will ever meet her beloved husband Lord Ram again in life. Trijata, like a true friend and companion, kept her spirit buoyed and morale boosted by always assuring her that she should not doubt that she would be rescued by the Lord sooner rather than later. The conversation between the two has been described in Geetawali, Sundar kand, verse no. 5/47 to 5/51. Now, let us hear them.}

Conversation between Sita and Trijata—

Geetawali: Raag Jaitsree: Verse no. 5/47—

कब देखौंगी नयन वह मधुर मूरति?
 राजिवदल—नयन, कोमल, कृपा—अयन,
 मयननि बहु छबि अंगनि दूरति ॥ 1 ॥
 सिरसि जटा—कलाप, पानि सायक,
 चाप, उरसि रुचिर बनमाल लूरति ।
 तुलसिदास रघुबीरकी सोभा सुमिरि,
 भई है मगन नहि तनकी सूरति ॥ 2 ॥

Verse no. 5/47—[Sita said to the demoness Trijata—] 'When shall I see that enchanting and lovable (sweet, pleasant) image (of my beloved husband Sri Ram) with these eyes? When shall I see him whose eyes are akin to the lotus flower, who is most tender and a mine of mercy and kindness, and whose most enchanting image puts to shame the magnificence and glamour of numerous Kamdeo-cupids put together? (1).

(When shall I meet—) The Lord (who) has matted hairs on the head, a bow and arrow in the hands, and an attractive 'Van-mala' (a garland made of marigold flowers) always hanging on his broad chest.'

Tulsidas says that Sita has become immersed in the thoughts of Raghubir (literally the strong and brave warrior of king Raghu's clan; Lord Ram) whose magnificence, glamour, majesty and spectacular beauty is so overwhelming and enrapturing that she appears to have lost awareness of her body (and her surroundings) (2). [5/47]

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 5/48—

कहु, कबहुँ देखिहौं आली ! आरज—सुवन ।
 सानुज सुभग—तनु जबतें बिछुरे बन,
 तबतें दव—सी लगी तीनिहू भुवन ॥ 1 ॥
 मूरति सूरति किये प्रगट प्रीतम हिये,
 मनके करन चाहैं चरन छुवन ।
 चित चढ़िगो बियोग—दसा न कहिबे जोग,
 पुलक गात, लागे लोचन चुवन ॥ 2 ॥
 तुलसी त्रिजटा जानी, सिय अति अकुलानी
 मृदुबानी कह्यौ ऐहैं दवन—दुवन ।
 तमीचर—तम—हारी सुरकंज—सुखकारी
 रबिकुल—रबि अब चाहत उवन ॥ 3 ॥

Verse no. 5/48—[Sita continued—] 'Friend Trijata! Say, will I be ever able to have Darshan (a reverential viewing) of the Aaryaputra (the son born in the Aryan race; here referring to Lord Ram), who is an image (i.e. embodiment, personification) of beauty and magnificence, along with his brother (Laxman)?

Ever since I was separated from them in the forest, the three Lokas (subterranean, terrestrial and heavenly worlds; literally meaning the whole world) seem to be engulfed in a wild forest-fire for me. [That is, I don't find peace and comfort anywhere. Day and night, morning and evening, summer or winter, rainy season or dry days—I feel equally tormented and burn inside by the fire ignited due to the agony and misery caused by separation from Lord Ram. The grief and anguish are roasting me alive.] (1).

My beloved (Ram) reveals himself in my heart as soon as I remember his image (form) which is most adorable and loving. I want to touch his feet by the hands of my mind (imagination), but when I recall his separation from me, then my (physical and mental) condition cannot be described—the body becomes thrilled and tears roll down my eyes (2).'

Tulsidas says that when Trijata saw that Sita was excessively agitated and anguished, she consoled her with these sweet and comforting words, 'Sri Ram, who is the destroyer of enemies, will come soon. The 'Sun' of the solar race is the destroyer (eliminator, remover, vanquisher) of darkness representing the demons, and is favoured by the garden of lotuses representing the Gods. This Sun is about to rise.'

[Here, the 'Sun' is a metaphor for Sri Ram. The phrase 'the sun of the solar-race' means that Lord Ram is the brightest, the most glorious and the most renowned amongst all the kings of the Sun-race. The 'demons' stand for all the wicked, evil and unrighteous creatures. The Gods are compared to the lotus because of their good virtues just like the lotus flower which is deemed to be pure, clean and incorruptible inspite of living inside a

dirty pond. The Lord is a favourite with the Gods because he affords them his full support and protection, and like the celestial sun he removes the darkness represented by the evil and wicked demons.] (3). [5/48]

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/49—

अबलौं मैं तोसों न कहे री।
 सुन त्रिजटा ! प्रिय प्राननाथ बिनु बासर निसि दुख दुसह सहे री॥ 1॥
 बिरह बिषम बिष—बेलि बढी उर, ते सुख सकल सुभाय दहे री।
 सोइ सीचिबे लागि मनसिजके रहँट नयन नित रहत नहे री॥ 2॥
 सर—सरीर सूखे प्रान—बारिचर जीवन—आस तजि चलनु चहे री।
 तैं प्रभु सुजस—सुधा सीतल करि राखे, तदपि न तृप्ति लहे री॥ 3॥
 रिपु—रिस घोर नदी बिबेक—बल, धीर—सहित हुते जात बहे री।
 दै मुद्रिका—टेक तेहि औसर, सुचि समीरसुत पैरि गहे री॥ 4॥
 तुलसिदास सब सोच पोच मृग मन—कानन भरि पूरि रहे री।
 अब सखि सिय सँदेह परिहरु हिय, आइ गए दोउ बीर अहेरी॥ 5॥

Verse no. 5/49—[Sita replied to Trijata—] ‘Dear, I have not disclosed this to you until now. Listen Trijata, I have suffered intensely day and night without (the company of) my beloved (husband, Sri Ram) (1).

The poisonous creeper representing horrible miseries of separation has grown robust in my heart. It has naturally burnt (sucked out and destroyed) all my joys and happiness. It appears that my eyes are like the bulls which are always yoked to the water-wheel to draw water so as to somehow douse this fire of agony caused by separation from the Lord. [Sita means that tears constantly flow from her eyes to soothe her weary, exhausted, pained and tormented nerves. Her grief is somewhat alleviated when she weeps just like the forest fire is somewhat calmed down when it rains.] (2).

My body-like lake has dried up (i.e. it has become emaciated and withered), hence the water-bird representing my soul (life) residing in it now wants to depart (i.e. I wish to die). In the present time, though you have temporarily stopped them from departing by attempting to quench their thirst by providing them with the life-sustaining nectar in the form of reassurance (that the Lord would definitely come to my rescue) along with narrating the divine glories and the auspicious virtues of the Lord (Sri Ram), they still are not satisfied (quenched and contented).

[Sita means that inspite of all the reassurances by Trijata she is finding it too much of a burden to live any longer without her beloved Lord Ram. She is longing desperately for the Lord, and mere words and assurances do not seem to help substantially unless there is some sort of positive signal or development to prove them. The odds are so heavily stacked against her that inspite of all the assurances of Trijata that the Lord would come soon and kill the demons and release her from captivity, Sita does not seem to rely or believe in them. Of course such sweet and reassuring words give her temporary relief, but sooner than later the feeling of wretchedness and misery returns with a vengeance.] (3).

These birds (representing my soul, my body and life) were just floating or drifting away in the fierce current of the river symbolized by wrath of the enemy (demons) relying upon the strength of wisdom and fortitude. But the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman), who is of a pure heart and intellect, swam across swiftly, caught hold of them and prevented them from getting lost by giving them a life-support (a buoy) in the signet ring (that the Lord had given him to be delivered to me). Thus, these birds were not only saved from drowning but also from getting lost for ever.

[The birds symbolize the life and body of Sita. Wisdom had prevented her from dying because she knew that if she lost courage and died then whatever chance she had of meeting the Lord again would be lost for ever. So she drew on her reserve of courage and fortitude to somehow linger on with life in a tenacious manner. But life was slowly ebbing away from her body just like the bird which was drifting away in the vicious current of the rapid water of the fast-flowing river. Then Hanuman came and threw the life-buoy in the form of the ring of Lord Ram. Sita clinged to this ring to save her precious life from sinking in the ocean of agony, misery, grief and torment to which she was subjected. Hanuman's arrival had helped to pull her out from the brink of certain death by injecting hope in her. The hope and the expectation that now she will soon meet her beloved Lord provided her the will and the encouragement to live on for some more time till the Lord comes and rescues her.] (4).'

[Virtually interrupting the narration, Tulsidas interjects here to observe—] 'Oh, in my mind representing a forest, there are hordes of animals representing all sorts of sorrows, miseries and troubles to which Sita was subjected.'

[Going back to the earlier narration, he says that Trijata replied to Sita—] 'Dear friend Sita! Shrug-off the doubts in your heart now. Both the hunters (Sri Ram and Laxman) have arrived (and, alluding to Tulsidas' interjection, she means that they will kill these wild animals represented by the demons which have been tormenting her).' (5).

Geetawali: Raag Bilaawal: Verse no. 5/50—

सो दिन सोनेको, कहू, कब ऐहै !
जा दिन बँध्यो सिंधु त्रिजटा ! सुनि तू संभ्रम आनि मोहि सुनैहै ॥ 1 ॥
बिस्व-दवन सुर-साधु-सतावन रावन किया आपनो पैहै ।
कनकपुरी भयो भूप बिभीषन, बिबुध-समाज बिलोकन धैहै ॥ 2 ॥
दिब्य दुंदुभी, प्रसंसिहैं मुनिगन, नभतल बिमल बिमाननि छैहै ।
बरषिहैं कुसुम भानुकुल-मनिपर, तब मोको पवनपूत लै जैहै ॥ 3 ॥
अनुज सहित सोभिहैं कपि महँ, तनु-छबि कोटि मनोजहि तैहै ।
इन नयनन्हि यही भाँति प्रानपति निरखि हृदय आनँद न समैहै ॥ 4 ॥
बहुरो सदल सनाथ सलछिमन कुसल कुसल बिधि अवध देखैहै ।
गुर, पुरलोग, सास, दोउ देवर, मिलत दुसह उर तपनि बुतैहै ॥ 5 ॥
मंगल-कलस, बधावने घर-घर, पैहैं माँगने जो जेहि भैहै ।
बिजय राम राजाधिराजको, तुलसीदास पावन जस गैहै ॥ 6 ॥

Verse no. 5/50—[Sita said—] ‘Oh Trijata! When will that golden (auspicious, fortunate) day dawn when, hearing that the ocean has been tamed (bridged), you will come hurriedly to convey this good news to me? (1).

When will the Gods rush to see (the spectacular marvel) that Ravana, who has crushed the world and tormented the Gods, has got the fruit of (i.e. punishment for) his (evil, sinful and unrighteous) deeds, and Vibhishan has become the king of Lanka instead? (2).

[I’m eagerly waiting for that fine day when—] There would be a loud chorus of kettle-drums (a musical instrument) being played in the sky to celebrate the victory, the sages and hermits shall be singing praises, the clear sky shall be covered by the vehicles of Gods from which flowers would be showered on the ‘Bhanukul Mani’ (literally, the jewel or the gem of the Solar Race, i.e. Lord Sri Ram), and at the opportune moment the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman) would take me there (to where my beloved Lord Sri Ram is) (3).

When I would see him (Sri Ram) along with his younger brother (Laxman) amongst the monkeys, his divine sight and its spectacular beauty would be so magnificent and bewitching to behold that it would be putting to shame millions of Kamdeo-cupids by its charm and magnificence. Indeed my heart will swell with joy and exhilaration on seeing my heart's beloved with my own eyes at that time (4).

Will the clever creator let me happily see Ayodhya once again accompanied by our group (of monkeys, bears etc.), along with the Lord (Sri Ram) and Laxman? The fierce and intolerable fire burning in my heart shall be doused when I see the Guru (Vashishtha), citizens, mothers-in-law (Kaushalya, Sumitra etc.), and both my brothers-in-laws (Bharat and Shatrughan) (5).

On that occasion, auspicious pitchers and pots would be put up as decorations in each household, and celebratory (felicitous) songs would be sung. The alms-seekers would get what they want, while Tulsidas will sing the song of glorious victory of the great king, Lord Sri Ram!’ (6) [5/50]

[Note—Once again Tulsidas prophesizes that when the happy days return to Ayodhya, he will be present at the time of Sri Ram's coronation to participate in the rejoicings and celebrations at that time. And as true scribe, he will give a first-hand account of the rejoicings, celebrations and festivities accompanying the Lord's ascension to the throne of Ayodhya] (6).

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/51—

सिय ! धीरज धरिये, राघौ अब ऐहैं ।
 पवनपूतपै पाइ तिहारी सुधि, सहज कृपालु, बिलंब न लैहैं ॥ १ ॥
 सेन साजि कपि-भालु कालसम कौतुक ही पाथोधि बँधैहैं ।
 घेरोइपै देखिबो लंकगढ़, बिकल जातुधानी पछितैहैं ॥ २ ॥
 निसिचर-सलभ कृसानु राम सर उड़ि-उड़ि परत जरत जड़ जैहैं ।
 रावन करि परिवार आगमनो, जमपुर जात बहुत सकुचैहैं ॥ ३ ॥
 तिलक सारि, अपनाय बिभीषन, अभय-बाँह दै अमर बसैहैं ।
 जय धुनि मुनि, बरसिहैं सुमन सुर, ब्योम बिमान निसान बजैहैं ॥ ४ ॥

बंधु समेत प्रानबल्लभ पद परसि सकल परिताप नसैहैं ।
 राम—बामदिसि देखि तुमहि सब नयनवंत लोचन—फल पैहैं ॥ 5 ॥
 तुम अति हित चितइहौ नाथ—तनु, बार—बार प्रभु तुमहि चितैहैं ।
 यह सोभा, सुख—समय बिलोकत काहू तो पलकैं नहिं लैहैं ॥ 6 ॥
 कपिकुल—लखन—सुजस—जय—जानकि सहित कुसल निज नगर सिधैहैं ।
 प्रेम पुलकि आनंद मुदित मन तुलसिदास कल कीरति गैहैं ॥ 7 ॥

Verse no. 5/51—[Trijata replied to Sita—] ‘Have courage and patience! Now, having got information about you from the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman), Raghav (Sri Ram) will come soon. He is merciful and kind by nature, and hence he will delay no further (1).

The Lord would bridge (tie, tame) the ocean playfully (without effort, easily) like Kaal (the God of death) does (with a creature when the time of its death arrives) after assembling an army of monkeys and bears. Now you would see Lanka surrounded on all the sides (i.e. besieged), and the demonesses would become extremely agitated and regret at the turn of events (2).

The foolish moths representing the demons would fly towards and get burnt by the fire of Sri Ram's arrows (i.e. they will be enticed and lured towards Sri Ram's arrows, and die in multitudes by being shot by these arrows of the Lord), even as Ravana would feel extremely contrite, remorseful and repentant while going to the ‘Yam Lok’ (the abode of Yam, the God of death and hell) accompanied by his family following in the vanguard. [Like the moths that fly towards the fire only to get burnt to death, the demons would voluntarily go and get killed by the arrows shot by Lord Ram and Laxman. When Ravana would be finally killed, he would go to the abode of the God of Death, Yam, and would be regretting at his decision of creating un-necessary enmity with Lord Ram that eventually led to the slaying of the entire demon race except some who did not oppose the Lord, such as Vibhishan and his companions.] (3).

The Lord would accept Vibhishan and anoint him as the king, and he would also make the Gods fearless and establish (reinstate) them in the heavens. At that auspicious moment, the sages and hermits would applaud, saying aloud ‘Hail, Hail!’ in chorus, the Gods would shower flowers from the sky as they watch the events from their aerial vehicles while simultaneously playing musical instruments to celebrate the occasion (4).

All the creatures would destroy (overcome, vanquish) all their sorrows, heart-burns and torments by touching the holy feet of Lord Ram along with his brother. All the creatures who have eyes would get the reward (fruit) of their eye-sight by seeing you (Sita) sitting on the left-hand side of Lord Ram (5).

You would look (glance) at the Lord with most affectionate glances and enchanted eyes, and the Lord would reciprocate. Watching those adorable, happy, joyous and magnificent moments, (a view of spectacular and of momentous importance and charm), all would be transfixed (and they would stare mesmerized, without blinking even for a moment) (6).

Thereafter, Lord Sri Ram—accompanied by the monkey army, Laxman, the glory and the good fame that he has acquired, the victory of Lanka as a trophy to his credit, and with Sita by his side—would go back happily to his city (capital, Ayodhya).

Tulsidas will sing the Lord's glories, virtues and famous deeds, that are magnificent and stupendously fascinating, with a thrilled body and a mind that is exhilarated and euphoric beyond description (7). [5/51]”

{Coming back to the place where the Lord was in the Rishyamook Mountain, preparations were underway to launch an assault on Lanka. Lord Ram summoned Sugriv, the king of monkeys, and asked him to prepare the army and move towards Lanka.}

Departure of Ram's army for Lanka : Ram Charit Mans:

तब रघुपति कपिपतिहि बोलावा । कहा चलैं कर करहु बनावा ॥6
 अब बिलंबु केहि कारन कीजे । तुरत कपिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीजे ॥7
 कौतुक देखि सुमन बहु बरषी । नभ तें भवन चले सुर हरषी ॥8
 दोहा- कपिपति बेगि बोलाए आए जूथप जूथ ।
 नाना बरन अतुल बल बानर भालु बरूथ ॥ [5/34/6-8, Doha no. 34.]
 प्रभु पद पंकज नावहिं सीसा । गर्जहिं भालु महाबल कीसा ॥1
 देखी राम सकल कपि सेना । चितइ कृपा करि राजिव नैना ॥2
 राम कृपा बल पाइ कपिंदा । भए पच्छजुत मनहुँ गिरिंदा ॥3
 हरषि राम तब कीन्ह पयाना । सगुन भए सुंदर सुभ नाना ॥4 [5/35/1-4]

Then, Lord Ram summoned the king of monkeys (Sugriv) and asked him to make preparation for departure for Lanka without any delay, and issue necessary orders to the monkeys in this regard (6-7). Seeing this fortunate spectacle, the Gods showered flowers and gladly returned to their respective abodes (8).

Sugriv summoned all the commanders of the army, and the multitudes of monkeys presented themselves. It was a huge congregation—bears, monkeys of different colours, strength and age [5/34/6-8,0].

They all bowed their heads before Lord Sri Ram and roared (1). Lord Ram surveyed the army and blessed them with merciful eyes (2). Emboldened by his grace and presence, they vied with each other as if to challenge even the winged mountains, as it were (3).

Heart full of joy, Lord Ram started for Lanka; many auspicious omens occurred at that moment [5/35/1-4].

Geetawali: Raag Maru: Verse no. 5/22—

जब रघुबीर पयानो कीन्हों ।
 छुभित सिंधु, डगमगत महीधर, सजि सारंग कर लीन्हों ॥1
 सुनि कठोर टंकोर घोर अति चौंके बिधि-त्रिपुरारि ।
 जटापटल ते चली सुरसरी सकत न संभु सँभारि ॥2
 भए बिकल दिगपाल सकल, भय भरे भुवन दसचारि ।
 खरभर लंक, ससंक दसानन, गरभ स्रवहिं अरि-नारि ॥3
 कटकटात भट भालु, विकट मरकट करि केहरि-नाद ।

कूदत करि रघुनाथ-सपथ उपरी-उपरा बदि बाद ।।4
 गिरि-तरुधर, नख मुख कराल, रद कालहु करत बिषाद ।
 चले दस दिसि रिस भरि 'धरु धरु' कहि, 'को बराक मनुजाद' ? ।।5
 पवन पंगु पावक-पतंग-ससि दुरि गए, थके बिमान ।
 जाचत सुर निमेष, सुरनायक नयन-भार अकुलान ।।6
 गए पूरि सर धूरि, भूरि भय अग थल जलधि समान ।
 नभ निसान, हनुमान-हाँक सुनि समुझत कोउ न अपान ।।7
 दिग्गज-कमठ-कोल-सहसानन धरत धरनि धरि धीर ।
 बारहि बार अमरषत, करषत, करकैं परीं सरीर ।।8
 चली चमू, चहु ओर सोर, कछु बनै न बरने भीर ।
 किलकिलात, कसमसत, कोलाहल होत नीरनिधि-तीर ।।9
 जातुधानपति जानि कालबस मिले बिभीषन आइ ।
 सरनागत-पालक कृपालु कियो तिलक, लियो अपनाइ ।।10
 कौतुकही बारिधि बैँधाइ उतरे सुबेल-तट जाइ ।
 तुलसिदास गढ़ देखि फिरे कपि, प्रभु-आगमन सुनाइ ।।11 [5/22]

Verse no. 5/22—At the time of Lord Ram's departure (with his army), the ocean became turbulent and mountains trembled. [There was a great tumult in the world.]

Presently, Lord Ram raised his bow (1). Brahma, Mahadeo (Lord Shiva) etc. were startled at its ferocious and loud thunderbolt-like sound. River Ganges slipped (in shock) from Lord Shiva's matted hairs, and he could not control her (i.e. there were floods) (2). All the guardians of the world became uneasy; all the 14 directions were filled with fear. Meanwhile, there was turmoil in Lanka. Ravana's ears stood on alert and wives of the demons miscarried (3).

The bears and monkeys began to grind their teeth, and invoking Lord Ram and taking oath in his name, they jumped one on top of the other in excitement (4). They had trees and mountains in their raised hands. Even the God of death feared their ferocious-looking sharp nails, claws and teeth. Shouting 'catch him, catch him—what is that demon in front of us'—they moved in all the directions (5). So much dust was raised that the Wind God got paralysed [was unable to move due to the weight of dust particles; i.e. the atmosphere was suffocating and dust got suspended in the air]; the sun, the moon and the fire were eclipsed, the chariots of Gods lost their way (in darkness); and since the Gods don't blink their eyes, they got choked with dust so much so that Indra's (king of Gods) eyelids became heavy and all the Gods prayed to end it all (6).

Many ponds and lakes were filled with kicked-up dust, and the hollow formed when mountains were uprooted and shifted or toppled over were filled with huge ocean-like water bodies. No one could here even himself due to the din and noise created by God's drums in the sky and the roaring of Hanuman on the ground (7). The brave Kurma (tortoise), Varaaha (the Boar) and Shesh Nath (the Serpent God) had somehow managed to hold the earth from toppling over with courage and great difficulty. Their bones creaked due to fatigue and weight of the army, so they had to repeatedly stretch in weariness to ease their tired bones and muscles (8). In this way, when the army of monkeys started on their mission, there was turbulence everywhere. It is not possible to

describe the crowd; the monkeys were jeering and cheering, and jam-packed elbow to elbow. There was a loud noise near the ocean-shore (9).

At this moment, Vibhishan came to meet Lord Ram because he had recognised the fact that the demons had subjugated themselves to God of Death and Destruction (Kaal). Lord Ram, who is benevolent and merciful to refugees who have come to seek refuge at his holy feet, anointed him (as the king of Lanka) and accepted him (10).

Then, they constructed a bridge across the ocean as if it was a mere play for them, crossed it, and landed on the other side, and set up camp near Mt. Subel. Tulsidas says that the scouts among the monkeys went ahead, surveyed the fort, and leaving the message of Lord Ram's arrival at Lanka, came back to the camp. (11)."

{Vibhishan was the youngest brother of the demon king Ravana. When he advised Ravana to make peace with Lord Ram and return Sita to him, he was severely reprimanded and kicked by Ravana in open court. Vibhishan could not cope with this insult and humiliation, so he decided to quit Lanka and come to join Ram's camp. As we have already read in the context of Hanuman's entry into Lanka, Vibhishan was a great devotee of Lord Ram because he knew that the Lord was not an ordinary human prince but an incarnation of the Supreme Being who has come down on earth to get rid of the sinful demon race. Now, let's read on.}

Vibhishan's arrival in Ram's camp: Ram Charit Manas :

कहइ बिभीषन पुनि कर जोरी ॥ [5/40/4]
 दोहा- तात चरन गहि मागउँ राखहु मोर दुलार ।
 सीता देहु राम कहूँ अहित न होइ तुम्हार ॥ [Doha no. 40.]
 सुनत दसानन उठा रिसाई । खल तोहि निकट मृत्यु अब आई ॥2
 अस कहि कीन्हेसि चरन प्रहारा । अनुज गहे पद बारहिं बारा ॥6
 दोहा- रामु सत्यसंकल्प प्रभु सभा कालबस तोरि ।
 मैं रघुबीर सरन अब जाउँ देहु जनि खोरि ॥ [5/41/2,6, Doha no. 41.]
 अस कहि चला बिभीषनु जबहीं । आयूहीन भए सब तबहीं ॥1
 चलेउ हरषि रघुनायक पाहीं । करत मनोरथ बहु मन माहीं ॥4 [5/42/1,4]
 एहि बिधि करत सप्रेम बिचारा । आयउ सपदि सिंधु एहिं पारा ॥1
 कपिन्ह बिभीषनु आवत देखा । जाना कोउ रिपु दूत बिसेषा ॥2
 ताहि राखि कपीस पहिं आए । समाचार सब ताहि सुनाए ॥3 [5/43/1-3]
 दोहा- उभय भाँति तेहि आनहु हँसि कह कृपानिकेत ।
 जय कृपाल कहि कपि चले अंगद हनू समेत ॥ [Doha no. 44.]

[Back in Lanka, Ravana summoned his council of ministers and debated the next course of action.]

Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, tried to persuade Ravana to see the right path, return Sita to Lord Ram and desist from confrontation as it will only lead to ruin. He addressed Ravana with folded hands and said (4)—‘My dear brother, respect your

affection for me, I touch your feet and urge you to give Sita back to Ram; you will come to no harm this way. (This is my wise advise to you).’ [5/40/4,0].

Ravana was so enraged at this that he said, ‘Rascal! It appears your death has come near you (2).’

Scolding Vibhishan, Ravana kicked him in open court though Vibhishan had clasped his leg in humility and respect (6). Finally, Vibhishan decided to abandon his brother in Lanka because the assembly and advisors of the demon king were eclipsed by the shadow of death. ‘I am going to Lord Ram. Enough is enough. Don't blame me anymore.’[5/41/2,6,0].

Saying this, Vibhishan started towards Lord Ram's camp, and with his departure, all the residents of Lanka became doomed [5/42/1].

Vibhishan was thrilled and his heart was filled with many thoughts and wishes [5/42/4]. Immersed deeply in thoughts (of the future of the demon race, of his own future, of how he would be received in Lord Ram's camp, and of how fortunate he was that has got this golden chance to serve the Lord and fulfill his divine mission of eliminating the sinful demons), he came to this side of the ocean where Lord Ram had camped along with his army (1).

Seeing Vibhishan come, the monkeys guessed that he was a special emissary from the enemy (2). So, keeping him under guard because they were apprehensive of his intentions, they came to report to Sugriv (3). [5/44/1-3]

When the news reached Lord Ram, he said, ‘There is nothing to worry—whether he has come as a friend or as a spy. Go, bring him to me.’ Getting his permission and praising his glories, Hanuman and Angad, along with others, went to bring Vibhishan in the presence of Lord Ram [5/44].

{Insulted by his brother Ravana, Vibhishan decided to quit Lanka and join Lord Ram. }

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/26—

जाय माय पायँ परि कथा सो सुनाई है ।
 समाधान करति बिभीषनको बार बार,
 ‘ कहा भयो तात ! लात मारे, बड़ो भाई है ॥ 1 ॥
 साहिब, पितु समान, जातुधानको तिलक,
 ताके अपमान तेरी बड़िए बड़ाई है ’ ।
 गरत गलानि जानि, सनमानि सिख देति,
 ‘रोष किये दोष, सहें समुझें भलाई है ॥ 2 ॥
 इहाँतें बिमुख भये, रामकी सरन गए
 भलो नेकु, लोक राखे निपट निकाई है’ ।
 मातु—पग सीस नाइ, तुलसी असीस पाइ
 चले भले सगुन, कहत ‘मन भाई’ है ॥ 3 ॥

Verse no. 5/26—Vibhishan went straight to his mother, fell at her feet and told her the entire episode. His mother tried to comfort him, saying, ‘Son, what harm is done by his (Ravana's) kicking you? After all, he is your elder brother (1).

Firstly, he is your Lord (king, master of the kingdom and its sustainer). Secondly, he is an elder brother equivalent to a father. And thirdly, he is the best in the demon clan. His insulting you is no less than a favour for you. [First, this has motivated you to seek refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram. And second, you must remember that he is a demon who pays little heed to civil manners and courteous behaviour.]

Seeing that Vibhishan was full of despair, very remorseful and indignant at being publicly humiliated, she continued to try to placate his ruffled feelings, and said, 'Son, getting angry and revengeful at this point time is very unwise and futile, while being reasonable and tolerant will be most advisable and would provide for the well-being of all of us (because a calamitous war is looming over the city) (2).

Indeed, there is a slight better option of turning away from here (Ravana's camp) and taking shelter with Sri Ram, but if you act prudently enough, you can preserve the traditional wisdom and have full (ensure) welfare.'

[Clever use of words! She did not support treason; she could not send Vibhishan to Sri Ram knowing full well that it would be abetting revolt and speed-up the death of her elder son, Ravana. But, at the same time, there were three prominent factors at play in her mind to give a subtle, tacit approval of Vibhishan's decision to leave Ravana and join Sri Ram. First and foremost was that she realised that Vibhishan had his mind made up, would not listen, especially after being publicly rebuked and insulted. Secondly, in the case of a complete route of the demons and their annihilation in the war, at least one of her sons would survive to carry forward the demon clan. And thirdly, she realised that what Vibhishan had advised was indeed the truth; she must have been herself disgusted at Ravana's demeanours. But, here she saw an opportunity of cleaning the demon race of all evil mongers and unrighteous characters because as an elderly woman she must have recognised that ruin and disaster were near at hand.]

Tulsidas says that thereafter, Vibhishan bowed his head at the mother's feet, took her blessings, and left the place (for Sri Ram's camp). Seeing auspicious omens on the way, he thought—I have got what I desired (i.e. my decision is correct) (3).

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/27—

‘भाइ को सो करौं, डरौं कठिन कुफेरै ।
 सुकृत-संकट पर्यो, जात गलानिन्ह गर्यो,
 कृपानिधिको मिलौं पै मिलिकै कुबेरै’ ॥ १ ॥
 जाइ गह पाँय, धाइ धनद उठाइ भेट्यो,
 समाचार पाइ पोच सोचत सुमेरै ।
 तहँई मिले महेस, दियो हित उपदेस,
 रामकी सरन जाहि ‘सुदिनु न हेरै’ ॥ २ ॥
 जाको नाम कुंभज कलेस-सिंधु सोखिबेको,
 मेरो कह्यो मानि, तात ! बाँधे जिनि बेरै ।
 तुलसी मुदित चले, पाये हैं सगुन भले,
 रंक लूटिबेको मानो मनिगन-ढेरै ॥ ३ ॥

Verse no. 5/27—Vibhishan thought to himself, ‘I should respect my elder brother (Ravana) but I have a big problem. (He has threatened my life, kicked me, publicly humiliated me and has held me to be a spy of his enemy; so staying any longer is full of dangers).’ So, he decided to first meet his brother Kuber (the God's treasurer), and then decide on meeting Sri Ram (1).

So he went to Kuber and clasped his feet. Kuber rushed forward and embraced him. Hearing the entire episode, he stood on Mt. Sumeru and became thoughtful. There he met Lord Shiva, who gave him this advice, ‘Vibhishan! You go to seek refuge at the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram; you need not wait for an auspicious day or time for it (2).

Oh dear! He, whose name is like sage Agastya for drying up the ocean of sorrows and pains, there is no need to imagine any obstacles in going to take refuge at his holy feet. Pay heed to this advice of mine; you do not need to make any preparation for it!’

Tulsidas says hearing this, Vibhishan's doubts were removed, and he happily started for meeting Sri Ram. On the way, he met many auspicious, good omens as if a pauper is thrilled at the prospect of looting a treasury of jewels (3).”

Vibhishan arrives to meet Lord Ram, and is accepted by the kind-hearted Lord:
Ram Charit Manas—

नाथ दसानन कर मैं भ्राता । निसिचर बंस जनम सुखाता ॥7
सहज पापप्रिय तामस देहा । जथा उलूकहि तम पर नेहा ॥8 [5/45/7-8]
दोहा- श्रवन सुजसु सुनि आयउँ प्रभु भंजन भव भीर ।
त्राहि त्राहि आरति हरन सरन सुखद रघुबीर ॥ [Doha 5/45.]
अस कहि करत दंडवत देखा । तुरत उठे प्रभु हरष बिसेषा ॥1
दीन बचन सुनि प्रभु मन भावा । भुज बिसाल गहि हृदयँ लगावा ॥2 [5/46/1-2]
सुनु लंकेस सकल गुन तोरें । तातें तुम्ह अतिसय प्रिय मोरें ॥1
एवमस्तु कहि प्रभु रनधीरा । मागा तुरत सिंधु कर नीरा ॥8
जदपि सखा तव इच्छा नाहीं । मोर दरसु अमोघ जग माहीं ॥9
अस कहि राम तिलक तेहि सारा । सुमन बृष्टि नभ भई अपारा ॥10 [5/49/1, 8-10]

Appearing before Lord Ram, Vibhishan introduced himself saying, ‘Lord! I am the brother of the 10-headed Ravana. I am born in the race of demons, a race which is the tormentor of Gods (7). My body has a preponderance of sins and ignorance, and I have an affinity for them even as an owl has affinity for darkness (8). Having heard your glories and praises of your famed name with my ears, I have come seeking refuge and salvation at your holy feet. Save me, save me, oh Lord. You are the reliever of distress and delight those who seek refuge in you.’ [5/45/7-8, Doha no. 5/45]

Saying so, he prostrated himself reverentially before Lord Ram, who rose joyously, immediately lifting him and clasping him to his bosom with his long arms. Vibhishan's words of humiliy and distress pleased him much [5/46/1-2].

Lord Ram said, ‘Listen, the king of Lanka! You possess all virtues (of a true devotee). That is why you are extremely dear to me.’ [5/49/1].

Then, Lord Ram asked for water of the ocean (because no other water was available). (8) He said to Vibhishan, 'Friend, though you have no desire, but my meeting and contact never goes in vain (9).'

Saying this, Lord Ram anointed him as the king of Lanka then and there; the Gods showered flowers from the sky (10) [5/49/1,8-10].

दोहा- रावन क्रोध अनल निज स्वास समीर प्रचंड ।
जगत बिभीषणु राखेउ दीन्हैउ राजु अखंड ॥(Ka)
जो संपति सिव रावनहि दीन्हि दिऐँ दस माथ ।
सोइ संपदा बिभीषनहि सकुचि दीन्हि रघुनाथ ॥ (Kha) [Doha 5/49-Ka and Kha]

Thus, Lord Ram protected Vibhishan from getting burnt in the fire of Ravana's anger that was fanned by his (Vibhishan's) words (i.e. his advice to Ravana to return Sita and make peace with Ram). He bestowed Vibhishan the sovereignty of Lanka for eternity. The prosperity and wealth which Shiva had bestowed upon Ravana after the latter had offered (sacrificed) his head ten times, the same wealth was given by Lord Ram to Vibhishan even without his seeking it or making any efforts to get it [Doha 5/49 Ka and Kha].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 5/32—

नगर कुबेर को सुमेरुकी बराबरी,
बिरंचि-बुद्धिको बिलासु लंक निरमान भो ॥1
ईसहि चढ़ाइ सीस बीसबाहु बीर तहाँ,
रावनु सो राजा रज-तेजको निधानु भो ॥2
'तुलसी' तिलोककी समृद्धि, सौंज, संपदा
सकेलि चाकि राखी, रासि, जाँगरु जहानु भो ॥3
तीसरें उपास बनबास सिंधु पास सो
समाजु महाराजजु को एक दिन दानु भो ॥4 [5/32]

Verse no. 5/32—Lanka was called the city of Kuber (who was the God of wealth and treasurer for the Gods). Being made of gold, it is like Sumeru (a mythological golden Mountain); it is so wonderful that it symbolises the excellent creative prowess of Brahma in a personified form (1). There, Ravana, the 20-armed demon, became a king after offering his head as sacrifice to Lord Shiva (2).

Tulsidas says that all the wealth of this world has been concentrated within its boundaries, as it were, and the rest of the world was filled with the residue (3). All this wealth was given to Vibhishan by Lord Ram as if it were charitable alms given by the forest-bound-mendicant Lord Ram after doing austerities for three days on the shore of the ocean¹ (4).

[Note—¹Lord Ram had camped on the ocean's shore for three days, requesting the ocean to give him passage. There the Lord had also consecrated a Shiva Lingam, which is a symbol of Lord Shiva. It was called 'Rameshwaram'—

literally meaning the Lord of Ram. The word has a dual meaning—for it also means ‘Shiva whose Lord (Ish) is known as Ram’. Anyway, the Lord had performed a religious sacrifice here before he would start on the campaign for conquering Lanka. When any religious event takes place, giving charity and making alms is a part of the ritual. So, Tulsidas uses this tradition as a metaphor to indicate that Lord Ram had voluntarily donated the entire kingdom of Lanka, which he is poised to conquer soon, to Vibhishan.

From the point of military strategy, this was a very clever step of Lord Ram. By anointing Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka even before the campaign had got off the ground and the outcome of the war was still unknown, the Lord extended to Vibhishan a bait to ensure his loyalty. Now Vibhishan had all the reasons to support Ram, because if Ravana is killed then not only will Vibhishan be able to avenge his insult but also get the trophy in the form of kingdom of Lanka. This single act of Lord Ram also meant to convey to everyone around that they should not doubt victory as it is a foregone conclusion. It also subtly warned the monkeys that they should not eye the kingdom of Lanka after victory over it because it is given to Vibhishan, and that the Lord himself had no intention of staying there once Sita was recovered. Lord Ram clearly indicated that he is not there to grab someone’s property and wealth like conquerors usually do.]

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/31—

आइ सचिव बिभीषनके कही ।
 कृपासिंधु ! दसकंधबंधु लघु चरन-सरन आयो सही ।।।।।
 विषम बिषाद-बारिनिधि बूड़त थाह कपीस-कथा लही ।
 गये दुख-दोष देखि पदपंकज, अब न साध एकौ रही ।।२।।
 सिथिल-सनेह सराहत नख-सिख नीक निकाई निरबही ।
 तुलसी मुदित दूत भयो, मानहु अमिय-लाहु माँगत मही ।।३।। [5/31]

Verse no. 5/31—When Vibhishan reached the camp of Lord Ram, his minister or the assistant who had accompanied him, came to the Lord and said, ‘Oh Merciful! Ravana's younger brother has come to seek your refuge without any trick or deceit in his heart (1). He was almost drowned in the sea of distress when the story of Sugriv (as told to him by Hanuman) gave him hope and buoyancy. Now, having reached your feet, all his woes and troubles are over, and he has no wishes left. Will you please accept him? (2).’

Lord Sri Ram looked beautiful and welcoming, and the minister (of Vibhishan) felt relaxed in the Lord's presence. [The Lord’s demeanours and expressions showed that he was not annoyed, alarmed or suspicious, rather was friendly, welcoming, amiable and gracious.]

Tulsidas says that at that moment, the minister was so happy as if he got nectar while asking for butter-milk. [That is, the minister of Vibhishan had not expected such kind reception in an enemy’s camp, so he was pleasantly surprised when Lord Ram welcomed him.] (3) [5/31].

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/36—

रामहि करत प्रणाम निहारिकै ।
 उठे उमैंगि आनंद-प्रेम परिपूरन बिरद बिचारिकै ॥1॥
 भयो बिदेह बिभीषन उत, इत प्रभु अपनपौ बिसारिकै ।
 भली भाँति भावते भरत ज्यों भेंट्यौ भुजा पसारिकै ॥2॥
 सादर सबहि मिलाइ समाजहि निपट निकट बैठारिकै ।
 बूझत छेम-कुसल सप्रेम अपनाइ भरोसे भारिकै ॥3॥
 नाथ ! कुसल-कल्यान-सुमंगल बिधि सुख सकल सुधारिकै ।
 देत-लेत जे नाम रावरो, बिनय करत मुख चारि कै ॥4॥
 जो मूरति सपने न बिलोकत मुनि-महेस मन मारिकै ।
 तुलसी तेहि हौं लियो अंक भरि, कहत कछू न सँवारिकै ॥5॥ [5/36]

Verse no. 5/36—Seeing Lord Sri Ram, Vibhishan bowed his head most reverentially, remembering his nature of giving refuge to the distressed and being merciful to the sinful. Lord Ram's heart overflowed with joy, and he rose to welcome him affectionately. At the moment, on the one hand Vibhishan had lost consciousness of his surroundings, so thrilled and overwhelmed with joy he was, and on the other hand Lord Ram, remembering his earlier meeting at Chitrakoot with brother Bharat, embraced Vibhishan with wide open arms, and clasped him most affectionately (2). Then, introducing him to all his companions, Lord Ram seated him near himself, and accepting him as one of his own men, reassured him and asked about his welfare (3).

Vibhishan replied, 'Oh Lord! Those who chant your name are highly regarded by Brahma (the creator) and provided by all welfare, happiness and peace by him, so what to talk of me! [That is, those who merely take your holy name are blessed by good fortune by the creator, but here I am sitting directly in front of you, hence these benefits are guaranteed to me in abundance. The creator would shower me with his blessings. I am indeed so fortunate that you have seated me beside you.] (4).

Even eminent sages and gods find it difficult to have a vision of the Lord in their dreams despite all austerities and penances they do. That same Lord has embraced me! Say, how lucky I am indeed! I do not boast, nor am trying to please you (it is a fact, that is)! (5).' [5/36]

Geetawali: Verse no. 5/39—

सब भाँति बिभीषन की बनी ।
 कियो कृपालु अभय कालहुतें, गइ संसृति-साँसति घनी ॥1॥
 सखा लषन-हनुमान, संभु गुर, धनी राम कोसलधनी ।
 हिय ही और, और कीन्हीं बिधि, रामकृपा औरै ठनी ॥2॥
 कलुष-कलंक-कलेस-कोस भयो जो पद पाय रावन रनी ।
 सोइ पद पाय विभीषन भो भव-भूषन दलि दूषन-अनी ॥3॥
 बांह-पगार, उदार-सिरोमनि, नत-पालक, पावन पनी ।

सुमन बरषि रघुबर-गुन बरनत, हरषि देव दुंदुभी हनी ।।4।।
 रंक-निवाज रंक राजा किए, गए गरब गरि गरि गनी ।
 राम-प्रनाम महामहिमा-खनि, सकल-सुमंगलमनि-जनी ।।5।।
 होय भलो ऐसे ही अजहुँ गये राम-सरन परिहरि मनी ।
 भुजा उठाइ, साखि संकर करि, कसम खाइ तुलसी भनी ।।6।। [5/39]

Verse no. 5/39—Vibhishan had achieved everything in all respects. The merciful Lord Sri Ram made him fearless from the God of Death as well as from the torments of this world (1). He found friends such as Laxman and Hanuman, Guru such as Lord Shiva, and master such as Lord Ram. He had something different in his heart (fear of Ravana and worry for his own safety), but with Lord Ram's mercy an opposite prevailed (i.e. he became fearless and the happiest being) (2). Ravana, who as a demon had become the treasury of sins, most disgraceful in his race, and a storehouse of wickedness upon becoming the king of Lanka, the same post/designation (of being a demon king of Lanka) turned Vibhishan into the jewel of his race, and a slayer (eliminator) of all that was un-righteous and un-holy (3).

The Gods showered flowers, beat trumpets and sang the glory of Lord Ram whose arms are like walls to protect the distressed, who is most magnanimous and kind, who is an eternal sustainer of the universe, and who makes righteous vows and keep them diligently (4).

The helper of poor (Lord Ram) had made the pauper Vibhishan into a King (of Lanka). This crushed the false pride of the so-called millionaires and super-rich people (who boast of being charitable by giving only a miniscule portion of their fortunes as charity or alms while hiding the bulk of their wealth and treasures). Bowing before Lord Ram and submitting one's self to the Lord is like a rich mine of all types of priceless jewels. [That is, if one surrenders one's self before the Lord, all the goodness that exist in this world, all the auspicious virtues and qualities, all the good fortunes and luck, all sorts of peace and happiness—everything becomes easily accessible by him.] (5).

Tulsidas says that if one goes to seek refuge at the feet of Lord Ram even now, all these benefits can be had by him. He says this with Lord Shiva as a witness, raising his hands and making a solemn oath that what he says is the truth and he is very definite of it (6). [5/39]

{Now the problem was to cross the ocean with such a huge army. So it was decided that a bridge be built across it.}

Construction of the Bridge across the ocean: Ram Charit Manas:

दोहा- बिनय न मानत जलधि जड़ गए तीनि दिन बीति ।
 बोले राम सकोप तब भय बिनु होइ न प्रीति ।। [5/57]
 लछिमन बान सरासन आनू । सौषौं बारिधि बिसिख कृपानू ।। 1
 अस कहि रघुपति चाप चढ़ावा । यह मत लछिमन के मन भावा ।।5
 संधानेउ प्रभु बिसिख कराला । उठी उदधि उर अंतर ज्वाला ।।6

मकर उरग झष गन अकुलाने । जरत जंतु जलनिधि जब गाने ॥7
 कनक थार भरि मनि गन नाना । बिप्र रूप आयउ तजि माना ॥8 [5/58/1,5-8]
 सभय सिंधु गहि पद प्रभु केरे । छमहु नाथ सब अवगुन मेरे ॥ 1 [5/59/1]
 दोहा- सुनत बिनीत बचन अति कह कृपाल मुसुकाइ ।
 जेहि बिधि उतरै कपि कटकु तात सो कहहु उपाइ ॥ [Doha 5/59.]
 नाथ नील नल कपि द्वौ भाई । लरिकाई रिषि आसिष पाई ॥1
 तिन्ह के परस किऐँ गिरि भारे । तरिहहिं जलधि प्रताप तुम्हारे ॥2
 मैं पुनि उर धरि प्रभु प्रभुताई । करिहउँ बल अनुमान सहाई ॥3
 एहि बिधि नाथ पयोधि बँधाइअ । जेहिं यह सुजसु लोक तिहुँ गाइअ ॥4 [5/60/1-4]

Lord Ram tried to persuade the Ocean God to peacefully allow him and his army to cross over to the other side. Three days passed, but the Ocean God was haughty and adamant. So, finally, Lord Ram showed his anger by saying, 'There can be no friendship without inspiring fear (in the heart of the enemy) [5/57]. Laxman, go bring my bow and arrow. I shall dry up this ocean with an arrow that has the fire on its tip. [It was a missile mounted by some kind of warhead that would create fire which would dry up the ocean. Probably it was a thermo-nuclear weapon like the nuclear warhead mounted on modern-day missiles.] (1).

Saying this, Lord Ram put his arrow on the bow, and Laxman approved of it (5). As soon as Ram fitted the terrible arrow to his bow, ready to strike, a blazing fire broke out in the ocean's centre (i.e. it started boiling) so much so that fishes, alligators/crocodiles, sea-serpents etc. became extremely distressed. When the Ocean God saw the creatures residing in the ocean being burnt and scalded by the heat generated (7), he took the form of a Brahmin, and shedding all his pride and ego, he approached Lord Ram with a gold plate filled with jewels and gems of the ocean (8). [5/58/1,5-8]

Fearing for his life, the Ocean God fell at the feet of Lord Ram, clasped it and pleaded for forgiveness—'Oh Lord! Please excuse all my sins and follies.' [5/59/1].

Hearing his earnest plea, the merciful Lord smiled and said, 'Dear, tell me the way in which the army of monkeys can crossover to the other side.' [Doha 5/59].

The Ocean God replied, 'Lord! There are two brothers in your army, and their names are Nal and Neel. A sage has blessed them with a boon that boulders, rocks, hills etc. shall float on the water of the ocean if they touch them. (1-2). Besides this, I shall also extend my help as much as I can (3).

In this way, you can build a bridge across the salty ocean, and this deed of yours shall be sung in the three Lokas (heaven, earth and subterranean worlds) for all times to come (4).' [5/60/1-4].

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Chapter 8

Lanka Kand

{This chapter deals with the following main events in the life-story of Lord Ram—installation of Lord Shiva at Ramesh-swaram, crossing the ocean and encampment in Lanka, sending Angad as emissary as a last ditch attempt to avoid war, slayings of Meghnad and Kumbhakaran, the final battle and slaying of Ravana, installation of Vibhishan as king of Lanka, and return of Lord Ram and his companions to Ayodhya by the air-route.}

Completion of the bridge: Ram Charit Manas

जामवंत बोले दोउ भाई । नल नीलहि सब कथा सुनाई ॥5
 राम प्रताप सुमिरि मन माहीं । करहु सेतु प्रयास कछु नाहीं ॥6
 बोलि लिए कपि निकर बहोरी । सकल सुनहु बिनती कछु मोरी ॥7
 राम चरन पंकज उर धरहू । कौतुक एक भालु कपि करहू ॥8
 धावहु मर्कट बिकट बरूथा । आनहु बिटप गिरिन्ह के जूथा ॥9
 सुनि कपि भालु चले करि हूहा । जय रघुबीर प्रताप समूहा ॥10 [6/1/5-10]
 दोहा- अति उत्तंग गिरि पादप लीलहि लेहिं उठाइ ।
 आनि देहिं नल नीलहिं रचहिं ते सेतु बनाइ ॥ [Doha 6/1.]
 सैल बिसाल आनि कपि देहीं । कंदुक इव नल नील ते लेहीं ॥11
 देखि सेतु अति सुंदर रचना । [6/2/1-2]
 बाँधि सेतु अति सुदृढ़ बनावा । देखि कृपानिधि के मन भावा ॥ [6/4/1]

On the advice given by the Ocean-God, it was finally decided to entrust the 2 brothers Nal and Neel with the job of constructing the bridge to enable the army to cross over to Lanka.

So, Jamvant (the bear king) summoned them and told the whole story (5), and advised them to invoke Lord Ram in their heart and make an effort (to construct the bridge). He assured them that it won't be difficult for them (6). Then he called all the troops and instructed them, 'All of you, listen to my prayer (request, submission, instructions) (7). Bearing Lord Sri Ram's (holy) feet in your heart, make a sport of the job at hand (do it playfully) (8). Oh you formidable monkeys and bears! Rush and uproot and bring here heaps of trees and mountains or big boulders that are as large as hills (9).' Hearing the order, all the monkeys and bears made an uproarious cheer, 'Glory to Lord Ram, and ran in all directions (10). [6/1/5-10].

They uprooted huge trees and mountains, brought them to Nal and Neel, who meticulously started to construct the bridge [Doha 6/1].

The huge mountains were brought by them and received by Nal-Neel as if there were balls for playing (1). Slowly, a beautiful and strong bridge was built (2) [6/2/1-2]. Lord Ram was most pleased to see it [6/4/1].

{Though Tulsidas has not given us details of how exactly the bridge was built, we have other sources which definitively narrate its construction. One is the Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, and the other is the Devi Puran which contains a section dealing with the story of Ramayan.

Now, let us read both to see how the bridge got underway.}

Adhyatma Ramayan, Uddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 86-87, and Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8 describe its construction as follows—

Uddha / Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 86-87:

ततो रामस्तु सुग्रीवलक्ष्मणाभ्यां समन्वितः। नलमाज्ञापयच्छीघ्रं वानरैः सेतुबन्धने॥८६॥
ततोऽतिहृष्टः प्लवगेन्द्रयूथपैर्महानगेन्द्रप्रतिमैर्युतो नलः।
बबन्ध सेतुं शतयोजनायतं सुविस्तृतं पर्वतपादपैर्दृढम्॥८७॥

Nal (pronounced as 'Nala') was ordered by Sri Ram, Sugriv and Laxman to tie the bridge with the help of other monkeys (86). Then Nal most cheerfully built a bridge with the help of commanders and chieftains of the various monkey hordes who were as colossus as mountains themselves. This bridge was built using huge mountains and trees. The bridge was very strong and sturdy, and it extended for 100 Yojans (800 miles from the shore of India to Sri Lanka) (87).

[Note—The logs of wood from trees were used because they would keep the slabs of stones afloat on the water, and the planks were tied together using creepers found on mountains and trees. The existence of this bridge has been established by satellite images taken by the Indian satellite IRS-1A which in 1962 had taken photographs of the remnants of a stone bridge. It appeared to streak from Dhanushkoti in India to Talai Manner in Sri Lanka. This was corroborated by U.S. astronauts aboard gemini XI satellite launched on 14/9/1966.]

Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8:

कृतानि प्रथमेनाह्वा योजनानि चतुर्दश। द्वितीयेन तथा चाह्वा योजनानि तु विंशतिः॥५॥
तृतीयेन तथा चाह्वा योजनान्येकविंशतिः। चतुर्थेन तथा चाह्वा द्वाविंशतिरिति श्रुतम्॥६॥
पञ्चमेन त्रयोविंशद्योजनानि समन्ततः। बबन्ध सागरे सेतुं नलो वानरसत्तमः॥७॥

It is heard that on the first day the bridge was tied for a distance of 14 Yojans, on the second day for 20 Yojans (5), on the third day 21 Yojans, on the fourth day 22 Yojans (6) and on the fifth day for the remaining 23 Yojans. Thus, the bridge was completely tied (and made walk-able) over the ocean by Nal who was the best amongst the monkeys in the field of his expertise (7).

[Note—We see that the bridge was completed in a 5 days as follows—
14+20+21+22+23 = 100 Yojans.]

But according to the Devi Puran it was done in a single day, between sunrise and sunset. Its construction is described in Canto 40, verse nos. 5-7 as follows:

चक्रे जलनिधिं घोरं स्वयंस्वीकृतबन्धनम् । ततः सुग्रीववचनादुत्पाट्योत्पाट्य भूधरान् ॥५॥
रचयामास जलधौ सेतुं मयसुतो नलः । आरभ्य पौर्णमास्यां तु श्रावण्यां मुनिसत्तम ॥६॥
यामद्वयेनैव सेतुं सागरे वानरर्षभः । बबन्ध मुनिशार्दूल सर्वलोकसुदुष्करम् ॥७॥

Lord Sri Ram created such a situation that the fierce and uncompromising ocean had to relent and submit itself to his wishes (i.e. he buckled against the might of Sri Ram and refrained from creating any hindrance in his endeavour to cross the ocean). The ocean rather became cooperative, and willingly accepted to be tied (bridged). Thereafter, on the instructions of Sugriv, huge mountains were uprooted and dumped into the ocean (5) by Nal, the son of Maye. Thus was created (constructed) the bridge. Oh the lion amongst sages (i.e. Narad)! The construction was started on the full moon day of the month of Shrawan (roughly late July-early August) (6), and that great and expert monkey completed it in (a record period of) two Prahars (i.e. approximately 6 hours; 1 Prahar = 3 hours) between sunrise and sunset. Oh the most exalted amongst sages (Narad)! This feat was most impossible for anyone to accomplish, and even imagine about (7).

Installation / Consecration of Sri Rameshwar: Ram Charit Manas

परम रम्य उत्तम यह धरनी । महिमा अमित जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥३॥
करिहउँ इहाँ संभु थापना । मोरे हृदयँ परम कलपना ॥४॥
सुनि कपीस बहु दूत पठाए । मुनिबर सकल बोलि लै आए ॥५॥
लिंग थापि बिधिवत करि पूजा । सिव समान प्रिय मोहि न दूजा ॥६॥ [6/2/3-6]

Before embarking on his mission across the bridge, Lord Ram wished to worship Lord Shiva. So he addressed the gathering and said, ‘This is an excellent and most delightful spot; its glory is immeasurable and cannot be described in words (3). I have a great desire to install Lord Shiva here (4).’

Hearing this, the monkeys ran in all directions and brought hither all the available sages to the sacred site (5). Then, with all rituals fit for such an occasion and following

the prescribed method, Lord Ram installed Lord Shiva, who is very dear to him, there (6). [6/2/3-6]

Crossing of the ocean and landing in Sri Lanka : Ram Charit Manas

चली सेन कछु बरनि न जाई । गर्जहिं मर्कट भट समुदाई ॥2
 सेतुबंध ढिग चढ़ि रघुदाई । चितव कृपाल सिंधु बहुताई ॥3
 चला कटकु प्रभु आयसु पाई । को कहि सक कपि दल बिपुलाई ॥9 [6/4/2-3,9]
 दोहा- सेतुबंध भइ भीर अति कपि नभ पंथ उड़ाहिं ।
 अपर जलचरन्हि ऊपर चढ़ि चढ़ि पारहि जाहिं ॥ [Doha 6/4.]
 अस कौतुक बिलोकि द्वौ भाई । बिहँसि चले कृपाल रघुदाई ॥1
 सेन सहित उतरे रघुबीरा । कहि न जाइ कपि जूथप भीरा ॥2
 सिंधु पार प्रभु डेरा कीन्हा । [6/5/1-3]
 इहाँ सुबेल सैल रघुबीरा । उतरे सेन सहित अति भीरा ॥ [6/11/1]

The huge army marched towards Lanka—it was a sight which was unparalleled and can't be described. All the troops were roaring and thundering tumultuously as they went along (2). Then, Lord Ram stepped on the bridge himself and surveyed the surroundings, smilingly (3).

Getting his green signal (command) the monkeys proceeded forth. It was a vast multitude of them (9) so much so that the bridge became overcrowded. So some of the monkeys left it and jumped across the ocean ahead of others, as if flying through the air. Then there were some monkeys who lost patient to follow others in a row on the face of the bridge, so they crossed over the ocean by jumping aside the bridge and rushing forward by mounting, leaping and jumping across the backs of sea-monsters who had surfaced to witness the spectacle.

[These marine creatures had come to the surface to witness this spectacular event. One more reason of their coming to the surface is that the bridge had caused a barrier to the flow of water and an obstacle in the path of marine creatures who were accustomed to moving unhindered in the ocean. So they surfaced to find out the reason. The bridge was chock-a-block with Lord Ram's army, and the surface of the ocean was crowded by the marine creatures that got stuck in their movement on either side of the bridge. It was a scene reminiscent of a huge traffic jam witnessed in a crowded city when its streets are jam-packed with military and civilian vehicles when some great war is looming over the country.] [Chaupai lines 6/4/2-3,9, doha 4].

Lord Ram and Laxman smiled at this amusing spectacle (1). By and by, the army finally landed on the shores of Lanka (2). Then, Lord Ram pitched his camp there (3) [6/5/1-3] at a place on Mt. Subel [6/11/1].

[Note—For description of the crossing as described in Geetawali, refer verse 5/22 of Chapter 7.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/6—

जब पाहन भे बनबाहन-से, उतरे बनरा, 'जय राम' रहैं ।
 'तुलसी' लिएँ सैल-सिला सब सोहत, सागरु ज्यों बल बारि बहैं ।।1
 करि कोपु करें रघुबीरको आयसु, कौतुक हीं गढ़ कूदि चहैं ।
 चतुरंग चमू पलमें दलि कै रन रावन-राढ़-सुहाड़ गहैं ।।2 [6/6]

Verse no. 6/6—When the stone (boulders) floated like boats, the monkeys crossed over them and landed on the shores of Lanka and chanted the glories of Lord Ram thunderously—i.e. they declared that the Lord has arrived finally. Tulsidas says that they appear glorious with trees and mountains in their hands even as the ocean appears during the rising tide (1). Full of anger, they obey each command of Lord Ram. Playfully they have jumped on the fort of Lanka as if they will repair the bones (i.e. crush them) of Ravana by destroying the four-wings of his army in a fleeting moment (very quickly once the Lord gave them the go-ahead signal) (2). [6/6].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/7—

बिपुल बिसाल बिकराल कपि-भालु, मानो
 कालु बहु बेष धरें, धाए किएँ करषा ।।1
 लिएँ सिला-सैल, साल, ताल औ तमाल तोरि
 तोषैं तोयनिधि, सुरको समाजु हरषा ।।2
 डगे दिगकुंजर कमटु कोलु कलमले,
 डोले धराधर धारि, धराधरु धरषा ।।3
 'तुलसी' तमकि चलैं, राघौकी सपथ करें,
 को करै अटक कपिकटक अमरषा ।।4 [6/7]

Verse no. 6/7—Multitudes of large and ferocious monkeys and bears ran thither as if the God of Death (Kaal) himself ran angrily (1). Some lifted boulders, some held mountains, others uprooted trees, large and thick, and together they beat the ocean and heaped these things over it. [As is the habit of monkeys, they started creating havoc all around. Also, another reason was to collect the trees, boulders, rocks, small hills etc. and make them handy at the time of battle]. Seeing all this, the Gods were thrilled (2).

The elephants trembled, (the bearers of earth) the Kurma (the legendary Tortoise) and Varaaha (Boar) wriggled, the mountains shook, and Lord Shesh Nath (the legendary Serpent) was crushed under the huge weight of the pile of trees and boulders that was collected and piled there (3).

Tulsidas says on oath that the monkeys walked smartly and arrogantly. Who is there (he wonders) to stop this angry army of monkeys? (4) [6/7].

The Barvai Ramayan describes the huge army of Lord Ram in verse no. 42 as follows—

बिबिध बाहिनी बिलसति सहित अनंत ।
जलधि सरिस को कहै राम भगवंत ।।42।।

42-The huge army of bears and monkeys in myriad formations and consisting of all types of members (i.e. consisting of different categories of bears and monkeys—young and old, novices and experts, sober and excited, some joining for the fun of it while others are professionals, some are serious while some are just making merry, some have joined under compulsion while others have joined voluntarily, some as mercenaries and others out of loyalty, devotion and duty) look marvelous along with ‘Anant’ (Laxman). Who can compare the army of the Lord (Sri Ram) even with an ocean?

[The army was so huge and countless that it appeared as if it were an ocean of soldiers. But since Lord Ram was its head and it was called a ‘Ram's army’, even this comparison or allusion is not proper. After all, the ocean has its boundaries and limits—it ends where the land begins, but Sri Ram's glorious and magnificent army was as fathomless and measureless as the Lord's glory itself.

The head of the army was ‘Anant’. This refers to the legendary Shesh-nath, the serpent on whose back Lord Vishnu reclines on the ocean of milk in the celestial world, and who supports the world from below upon its hood. This Shesh-nath had manifested himself as Laxman.]

{Lord Ram did not wish to shed blood unnecessarily if it could be avoided. He decided to give Ravana a chance to make peace by sending Angad, the crown prince of the monkeys, as his emissary to explore the possibility of avoiding a ruinous war. }

Sending Angad as emissary to the court of Ravana: Ram Charit Manas

इहाँ प्रात जागे रघुराई । पूछा मत सब सचिव बोलाई ।।1
कहु बेगि का करिअ उपाई । जामवंत कह पद सिरु नाई ।।2
मंत्र कहउँ निज मति अनुसार । दूत पठाइअ बालिकुमारा ।।4
नीक मंत्र सब के मन माना । अंगद सन कह कृपानिधाना ।।5
बालितनय बुधि बल गुन धामा । लंका जाहु तात मम कामा ।।6
बहुत बुझाई तुम्हहि का कहउँ । परम चतुर मैं जानत अहउँ ।।7
काजु हमार तासु हित होई । रिपु सन करेहु बतकही सोई ।।8 [6/17/1-2,4-8]
बंदि चरन उर धरि प्रभुताई । अंगद चलेउ सबहि सिरु नाई ।। [6/18/1]

The next morning, Lord Ram called his council of ministers and asked them what should be the next step (1), and what course of action should be adopted (this was deemed to be the first war council]).

Jamvant, the eldest among Ram's ministers and reknown for his wisdom¹ (2) [6/17/1-2], said—‘Lord, I advice you according to my intelligence and wisdom. It is better to first try and give peace a chance by sending Angad as an ambassador to Ravana's court (4).’

All agreed that it was a wise suggestion. So, Angad was summoned, and Lord Ram told him (5), 'Oh Son of Bali! You are full of intelligence, valour and virtues. Go to Lanka as my ambassador (6). I know you are clever, hence I won't give you detailed instructions (7). My brief is that we should act in a way which is beneficial for him (Ravana); go and talk with the enemy on these lines (brief) (8).' [6/17/4-8].

Bowing his head to all, Angad started on the mission [6/18/1].

[Note—¹(a) Before departure for Lanka, Hanuman had also asked for his advice, and (b) he also advised Ram on construction of the bridge.]

तुरत निसाचर एक पठावा । समाचार रावनहि जनावा ॥1
 सुनत बिहँसि बोला दससीसा । आनहु बोलि कहाँ कर कीसा ॥2
 आयसु पाइ दूत बहु धाए । कपिकुंजरहि बोलि लै आए ॥3
 अंगद दीख दसानन बैसैं । सहित प्रान कज्जलगिरि जैसैं ॥4
 उठे सभासद कपि कहूँ देखी । रावन उर भा क्रोध बिसेषी ॥8 [6/19/1-4, 8]
 दोहा- जथा मत्त गज जूथ महुँ पंचानन चलि जाइ ।
 राम प्रताप सुमिरि मन बैठ सभाँ सिरु नाइ ॥ [Doha 6/19.]
 कह दसकंठ कवन तैं बंदर । मैं रघुबीर दूत दसकंधर ॥
 मम जनकहि तोहि रही मिताई । तब हित कारन आयउँ भाई ॥2
 अब सुभ कहा सुनहु तुम्ह मोरा । सब अपराध छमिहि प्रभु तोरा ॥6
 दसन गहहु तृन कंठ कुठारी । परिजन सहित संग निज नारी ॥7
 सादर जनकसुता करि आगें । एहि बिधि चलहु सकल भय त्यागें ॥8 [6/20/1-2, 6-8]
 दोहा- प्रनतपाल रघुबंसमनि त्राहि त्राहि अब मोहि ।
 आरत गिरा सुनत प्रभु अभय करैगो तोहि ॥ [Doha 6/20.]

As soon as Angad reached the gates, he sent a demon to inform Ravana (1), who smiled and ordered that the monkey should be brought in his presence (2). Many messengers rushed and brought Angad to the court (3). Angad found Ravana to be a huge creature—as if he was a mountain of collyrium (Kajjal Giri) personified (4). The assembly rose (either as a mark of respect or fear or curiosity) when they saw the monkey (Hanuman). This enraged Ravana.

[Obviously he took umbrage of it. He did not expect that his own courtiers would stand up to show respect to an enemy's invading soldier or a messenger who sneaked in like a thief and caused havoc to his beautiful garden. How dare they do it? The courtiers stood up perhaps out of fear that if they do not show due respect to Hanuman that he would thrash them in the court itself, for they had already heard of his stounding strength, mighty prowess and valiant deeds. Another reason of their standing was that they were very curious to have a glance at this queer creature who was a sort of a novelty for them.] (8)

Invoking Lord Ram's might in his heart, Angad bowed his head and sat down fearlessly as a lion would amongst a herd of mad elephants [Doha 6/19.]

Ravana asked him who he was, and Angad replied that he was the messenger from Lord Ram (1), and that since his father (Bali) had been known to the former, he had come with the former's interest in mind (2).

'I am speaking for your own benefit, so heed me', Angad said. 'All your offences will be forgiven by Lord Ram (6). Put a straw between your teeth and an axe at your neck and accompanied by your wives and kin (7), with Sita in the lead, come with me to Lord Ram without any fear (8). Tell Lord Ram with humility and surrender, 'Oh Lord, save me.' The moment he hears your pitiful cry, the Lord shall surely rid you of all fears [Doha 6/20].'

{Of course it was not expected of Ravana to make such an abject surrender. So a verbal duel and a heated exchange of angry words followed. Angad got very agitated.}

अब जनि बतबढ़ाव खल करही । सुनु मम बचन मान परिहरही ॥
 दसमुख मैं न बसीठीं आयउँ । अस बिचारि रघुबीर पठायउँ ॥2
 बार-बार अस कहइ कृपाला । नहिं गजारि जसु बधैं सकाला ॥3
 मन महुँ समुझि बचन प्रभु केरे । सहेउँ कठोर बचन सठ तेरे ॥4
 नाहिं त करि मुख भंजन तोरा । लै जातेउँ सीतहि बरजोरा ॥5 [6/30/1-5]

Angad said, 'Look, you fool. Don't wrangle any more. Listen to my advice and get done with your pride (1). You 10-headed creature; I have not come to you to plead or negotiate. Lord Ram had sent me with other considerations in mind (2). He had repeatedly said that a lion gets no credit by killing a jackKaal (3). Bearing my Lord's instructions in mind I have suffered your pungent speech till now (4) Otherwise, I would have battered and smashed your face and forcefully taken away the captive Sita with me (5).' [6/30/1-5]

जिन्ह के बल कर गर्ब तोहि अइसे मनुज अनेक ।
 खाहिं निसाचर दिवस निसि मूढ़ समुझु तजि टेक ॥ [Doha 6/31 Kha]
 जब तेहिं कीन्हि राम कै निंदा । क्रोधवंत अति भयउ कपिंदा ॥1
 कटकटान कपिकुंजर भारी । दुहु भुजदंड तमकि महि मारी ॥3
 डोलत धरनि सभासद खसे । चले भाजि भय मारुत ग्रसे ॥4
 गिरत सँभारि उठा दसकंधर । भूतल परे मुकुट अति सुंदर ॥5 [6/32/1, 3-5]
 राम मनुज बोलत असि बानी । गिरहिं न तव रसना अभिमानी ॥8
 गिरिहिं रसना संसय नाहीं । सिरन्हि समेत समर महि माहीं ॥9 [6/33/8-9]
 मैं तव दसन तोरिबे लायक । आयसु मोहि न दीन्ह रघुनायक ॥1
 असि रिस होति दसउ मुख तोरौं । लंका गहि समुद्र महुँ बोरौं ॥2
 गूलरि फल समान तव लंका । बसहु मध्य तुम्ह जंतु असंका ॥3
 मैं बानर फल खात न बारा । आयसु दीन्ह न राम उदारा ॥4
 समुझि राम प्रताप कपि कोपा । सभा माझ पन करि पद रोपा ॥8

जौं मम चरन सकसि सठ टारी । फिरहिं रामु सीता मैं हारी ॥9
 सुनुहु सुभट सब कह दससीसा । पद गहि धरनि पछारहु कीसा ॥10 [6/34/1-4,8-10]
 दोहा- कोटिन्ह मेघनाद सम सुभट उठे हरषाइ ।
 झपटहिं टरै न कपि चरन पुनि बैठहिं सिर नाइ ॥ [Doha 6/34 Ka.]
 कपि बल देखि सकल हियँ हारे । उठा आपु कपि के परचारे ॥1
 गहत चरन कह बालिकुमारा । मम पद गहें न तोर उबारा ॥2
 गहसि न राम चरन सठ जाई । सुनत फिरा मन अति सकुचाई ॥3
 भयउ तेजहत श्री सब गई । मध्य दिवस जिमि ससि सोहई ॥4
 सिंघासन बैठेउ सिर नाई । मानहुँ संपति सकल गँवाई ॥5 [6/35/1-5]
 दोहा- रिपु बल धरषि कपि बालितनय बल पुंज ।
 पुलक सरीर नयन जल गहे राम पद कंज ॥ [Doha 6/35 Ka]

This indeed was the last straw for Ravana, so he retorted, 'Oh you fool of a monkey! The demons devour (gobble up) day and night many such men as he whose might you never relent from extolling. Realise it, you idiot, and stop being capricious, boastful and perverse [6/31/0B].'

When Ravana insulted and used such invectives and degrading words against Lord Ram, Angad became extremely angry (1) and retaliated, yelling furiously and beating his arms to the ground (3), as a result of which the earth shook and scared councillors slithered stealthily away from the site and ran helter-skelter, as if pursued by Ghosts (or hobgoblins of fear) (4); even Ravana almost toppled-over from his throne, but managed to recover, but his crown fell to the ground (5) [6/32/1,3-5].

Angad shouted back, 'It is strange that when you utter the words that Lord Ram is an ordinary mortal, your tongue does not drop-off from your mouth, Oh you proud and haughty demon! But there is no doubt that it would be so in the battle field [6/33/8-9]. I am capable of smashing your head to smithereens, but I do not have that command from Lord Ram (1). Otherwise, I feel so enraged by your behaviour and utterances that I would have bashed all your 10 heads and dropped Lanka into the ocean (by uprooting it and dumping it) (2) Lanka is teeming like insects inside the fruit of the Udumbra tree (Gular tree) (3), and being a monkey, I would have relished to eat it but Lord Ram has not ordered me to do so (4).'

With extreme indignation, Angad firmly planted his legs on the ground in the centre of the assembly and said (8), 'You fool and wicked wretch! I challenge you! If you can stir / move my legs than I lose and Sri Ram shall forgo Sita and return forthwith (9).'

Ravana, the 10 headed, exclaimed, 'Ah! Listen all you (demon) warriors and champions! 'Seize the monkey by the leg and dash him to the ground (10).'

 [6/34/1-4, 8-10]

Numerous warriors who were equal to Ravana's son Meghnad in strength, rose from their seats and gleefully rushed against Angad with all their might; they tried all tricks they knew-singularly and collectively, but couldn't move the leg a fraction of an inch; they sat down humbled, ashamed and heads drooping in humiliation [Doha 6/34 Ka].

When Ravana saw that all had lost in the face of the monkey's strength, he rose himself (1). When he caught hold of Angad's legs, the latter admonished him, saying, 'You wretched fool! What will you gain by holding my feet (2); why don't you clasp Lord Ram's feet!'

Ravana felt the most humiliated in his lifetime, and he returned hesitantly to his seat, dejected and distraught (3) as if a merchant had lost all his wealth. He looked pale and gloomy like mid-day-moon (4-5) [6/35/1-5].

Having thus vanquished Ravana's might, ego and pride, Angad returned to Lord Ram, thrilled and eyes wet with emotions [Doha 6/35Ka].

Geetawali: Raag Kanhara: Verse no. 6/2—

तू दसकंठ भले कुल जायो ।
 तामहँ सिव-सेवा, बिरंचि-बर, भुजबल बिपुल जगत जस पायो ।
 खर-दूषन-त्रिसिरा, कबंधरिपु जेहि बाली जमलोक पठायो ।
 ताको दूत पुनीत चरित हरि सुभ संदेस कहन हँ आयो ॥2॥
 श्रीमद नृप-अभिमान मोहबस, जानत अनजानत हरि लायो ।
 तजि ब्यलीक भजु कारुनीक प्रभु, दै जानकिहि सुनिह समुझायो ॥3॥
 जातें तब हित होइ, कुसल कुल, अचल राज चलिहँ न चलायो ।
 नाहित रामप्रताप-अनलमहँ ह्वै पतंग परिहँ सठ धायो ॥4॥
 जद्यपि अंगद नीति परम हित कह्यो, तथापि न कछु मन भायो ।
 तुलसिदास सुनि बचन क्रोध अति, पावक जरत मनहु घृत नायो ॥5॥ [6/2]

Verse no. 6/2—Addressing Ravana, Angad said—‘Oh Ravana! You are born in a good race and clan (because Ravana was born in the Brahmin race in the clan of sage Pulastya). Besides this, you have received a boon from Lord Brahma by worshipping him, and you have also acquired great fame in this world by worshipping Lord Shiva, and also through the various victories achieved by the means of your arm's strength (1).

I am the messenger of the one who has slayed the demon such as Khar, Dushan, Trishara and Kabandha etc., and enemies such as Bali etc. I have come to tell you his message (2). Either due to ignorance, or misled due to false pride of your fame and your crown (kinghood of Lanka), you have kidnapped Sita. Now you should heed my advice and return her to Lord Ram, and setting aside all deceit and mischief, chant the holy name of Sri Hari (Lord Ram) who is all merciful (3). By doing this you will benefit, your clan will have welfare and be alright, and your kingdom would become invincible and stable. Otherwise, oh you fool, you demons will burn yourselves in the fire of Lord Ram's valour and glory (4).’

Though Angad gave sane and wise council to Ravana, but he did not like it. Tulsidas says that he grew furious as if butter (ghee) had been added to a raging fire (5). [6/2]

Geetawali: Raag Kanhara: Verse no. 6/3—

तैं मेरो मरम कछू नहिं पायो ।
 रे कपि कुटिल ढीठ पसु पाँवर ! मोहि दास—ज्यों डाटन आयो ॥ 1॥
 भ्राता कुंभकरन रिपुघातक, सुत सुरपतिहि बंदि करि ल्यायो ।
 निज भुजबल अति अतुल कहौं क्यों, कंदुक ज्यों कैलास उठायो ॥ 2॥

सुर, नर, असुर, नाग, खग, किन्नर सकल करत मेरो मन भायो ।
 निसिचर रुचिर अहार मनुज—तनु, ताको जस खल! मोहि सुनायो ॥ 3 ॥
 कहा भयो, बानर सहाय मिलि, करि उपाय जो सिंधु बँधायो ।
 जो तरिहै भुज बीस घोर निधि, ऐसो को त्रिभुवनमें जायो ? ॥ 4 ॥
 सुनि दससीस—बचन कपि—कुंजर बिहँसि ईस—मायहि सिर नायो ।
 तुलसिदास लंकेस कालबस गनत न कोटि जतन समझायो ॥ 5 ॥

Verse no. 6/3—[Ravana replied—] ‘Oh wicked and stubborn monkey. You have not at all realised my influence and powers. Oh lowly and sinful animal! This is why you have come to admonish me as if I were your slave (or servant, subservient to you) (1).

Don't you know? My brother is Kumbhakarn who is a renowned destroyer of enemies, and the son had captured and brought the king of Gods (Indra) himself bound in shackles. What much can I say about my matchless strength of arms which had lifted Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) like it were a ball (2).

Gods, humans, demons, serpents [subterranean creatures] and Kinnars [a special type of demi-gods or celestial singers and dancers]—all of them follow my wishes. Oh you rascal! The human body is staple and delicious food for the demons. And you are trying to make me hear his (Sri Ram's) glories and fames (3).

Even if he has taken the help of monkeys, made efforts and has crossed the ocean, so what? But who has been born in this world who could cross the ocean represented by (the valour and strength of) my 20 arms? (4).’

Hearing these arrogant, haughty and irreverent words of Ravana, Angad, who was the lion amongst monkeys, bowed his head to (i.e. marveled at) the delusory powers of the Supreme Being.

[Angad sighed and felt amused at the delusions that the Lord creates. The power of the Lord makes a creature hallucinate and have a false notion of his own grandeur and majesty as well as invincibility and strength inspite of clear evidence to the contrary. Ravana was supposed to be intelligent enough to realise the consequences of fighting a war of which the result was a foregone conclusion. He should have been alarmed especially after having experienced what havoc Hanuman had earlier caused to Lanka by burning it to ashes. He had also known how the other demons who had tried to act smart with Lord Ram earlier had met their death. But even in the face of such obvious signs of impending devastation, he remains deluded about his own strength and invincibility. Instead of being prudent and making peace with Ram, he adopted a stubborn and a confrontational attitude.]

Tulsidas says that Angad tried millions of ways (i.e. all possible methods were employed by him) to make Ravana see reason (and return Sita, make peace with Sri Ram and avoid a calamitous war), but under the influence of death (Kaal) as he was, Ravana did not pay any attention (5). [6/3]

Geetawali: Raag Kanhara: Verse no. 6/4—

सुनु खल ! मैं तोहि बहुत बुझायो ।
 एतो मान सठ ! भयो मोहबस, जानतहू चाहत बिष खायो ॥ 1 ॥

जगत-विदित अति बीर बालि-बल जानत हौ, किधौ अब बिसरायो ।
 बिनु प्रयास सोउ हत्यो एक सर, सरनागतपर प्रेम देखायो ॥2॥
 पावहुगे निज करम-जनित फल, भले ठौर हठि बैर बढ़ायो ।
 वानर-भालु चपेट लपेटनि मारत, तब हैहै पछिताओ ॥3॥
 हौं ही दसन तोरिबे लायक, कहा करौं, जो न आयसु पायो ।
 अब रघुबीर-बान बिदलित-उर सोवहिगो रन भूमि सुहायो ॥4॥
 अबिचल राज बिभीषन को सब, जेहि रघुनाथ चरन चित लायो ।
 तुलसिदास यहि भाँति बचन कहि गरजत चल्थो बालि-नृप-जायो ॥5॥ [6/4]

Verse no. 6/4—Angad said again, ‘You rascal, listen! I tried to make you see reason but out of delusion you have become so haughty and arrogant that you willfully wish to eat poison (1). Don't you remember the world famous warrior Bali, or have you forgotten him? Look, Lord Ram killed him by a single arrow, and showed affection towards Sugriv who had sought his (Lord Ram's) refuge (2). You would also follow suit—you have dug your own grave by making Lord Ram an enemy! Now, during the battle, when you'll be thrashed and pounded by monkeys and bears, then you'll repent (3). I am capable of knocking off your teeth; but I have not got this command from Lord Ram, and I am so sorry I couldn't do it (knock your teeth off)! Now soon you'll lie down in the battlefield on being perforated by Lord Ram's arrows (4). Your kingdom would be given to Vibhishan who has devoted his mind at Lord Ram's feet.’

Tulsidas says, after saying such harsh words of warning and reproach, Angad departed from there, roaring loudly (5). [6/4]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/9—

‘आयो ! आयो ! आयो सोई बानर बहोरि !’ भयो
 सोरु चहुँ ओर लंकाँ आएँ जुबराजकें ॥
 एक काढ़ें सौंज, एक धौंज करें, ‘कहा हैहै,
 पोच भई’ महासोचु सुभटसमाजकें ॥2
 गाज्यो कपिराजु रघुराजकी सपथ करि,
 मूँदै कान जातुधान मानो गाजें गाजकें ॥3
 सहमि सुखात बातजातकी सुरति करि,
 लवा ज्यों लुकात, तुलसी झपेटें बाजकें ॥4 [6/9]

Verse no. 6/9—When the citizens of Lanka saw Angad enter the city, they thought that the same monkey who had burnt the city earlier (i.e. Hanuman) has come again (1). Some rushed for their weapons; others ran helter-skelter shouting, ‘Oh! It's very bad! What will happen now, who can tell? (2).’

The demons were very upset. When Angad roared, invoking the name of Lord Ram, the demons closed their ears as if thunderbolt had struck (3). Remembering the fearful deeds of Hanuman, they became scared and hid themselves even as a bird hides when an eagle swoops down on it (4) [6/9]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/10—

तुलसीस बल रघुबीरजू कें बालिसुतु
 वाहि न गनत, बात कहत करेरी-सी।
 ‘बकसीस ईसजू की खीस होत देखिअत,
 रिस काहें लागति, कहत हौं मैं तेरी-सी॥
 चढ़ि गढ़-मढ़ दृढ़, कोटकें कँगूरें, कोपि
 नेकु धका देहैं, ढैहैं ढेलनकी ढेरी-सी।
 सुनु दसमाथ! नाथ-साथके हमारे कपि
 हाथ लंका लाइहैं तौ रहेगी हथेरी-सी॥10॥ [6/10]

Verse no. 6/10—On the strength of the Lord of Tulsidas (Lord Ram), Angad, the son of Bali, does not pay any attention to Ravana’s stature or fame, but says sternly, ‘It appears that the wealth given to you by Lord Shiva as a boon is on the verge of ruin today—why are you angry, then? I talk of your welfare.

Oh Ravana! Listen, when the monkeys accompanying our Lord Ram would mount on the palaces of the fort and strong pinnacles of the ramparts and angrily push them, these would crumble and collapse like a heap of rubble; and if they lay their hands on Lanka, it would be laid bare like a palm (i.e. ruined and made desolate).’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/11—

‘दूषनु, बिराधु, खरु, त्रिसिरा, कबंघु बधे
 तालऊ बिसाल बेधे, कौतुकु है कालिको।
 एक ही बिसिष बस भयो बीर बाँकुरो सो,
 तोहू है बिदित बलु महाबली बालिको॥
 ‘तुलसी’ कहत हित मानतो न नेकु संक,
 मेरो कहा जैहै, फलु पैहै तू कुचालिको।
 बीर-करि-केसरी कुठारपानि मानी हारि,
 तेरी कहा चली, बिड़! तोसे गनै घालि को॥11॥ [6/11]

Verse no. 6/11—‘Look, he (Lord Ram) has slayed the demons Dushan, Viradh, Khar, Trishira and Kabandh; he has punctured very large palm trees by a single arrow—all these are of recent occurrence. Even you are aware of the death of the great warrior Bali—even that matchless warrior was capitulated by his single arrow. I talk of your good, but you do not fear (i.e. pay attention to good advice); how does it affects me—you will reap the fruits of your misdemeanour and misdeeds. Even Parashuram, who is like a lion for the elephant-like kings and who has an invincible and strong axe, surrendered before him—oh you wicked wretch! What ground do you stand in front of him? Who counts you even as a ‘Pasang’ (a counter-weight used in measuring scales)?’

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/12—

तोसों कहौं दसकंधर रे, रघुनाथ बिरोधु न कीजिए बौरे ।
 बालि बली, खरु, दूषनु और अनेक गिरे जे-जे भीति में दौरे ॥1
 ऐसिअ हाल भई तोहि धौं, न तु लै मिलु सीय चहै सुखु जौं रे ।
 रामकें रोष न राखि सकैं तुलसी बिधि, श्रीपति, संकरु सौ रे ॥2 [6/12]

Verse no. 6/12—In the Ravana's court, Angad said, 'Oh you 10-headed monster! I tell you truly—don't resist Lord Ram even by mistake. Great warriors like Bali, Khar Dhusan etc. who ran on the wall, fell down (1). You would also have the same fate; otherwise, if you want peace and happiness, then take Sita with yourself and go meet Lord Ram. Oh! Crores of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva cannot protect you against Lord Ram's anger (2).'

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/13—

तू रजनीचरनाथ महा, रघुनाथके सेवकको जनु हौं हौं ।
 बलवान है स्वानु गलीं अपनी, तोहि लाज न गालु बजावत सौहौं ॥
 बीस भुजा, दस सीस हरौं, न डरौं, प्रभु-आयसु-भंग तैं जौं हौं ।
 खेतमें केहरि ज्यों गजराज दलौं दल, बालिको बालकु तौ हौं ॥13॥ [6/13]

Verse no. 6/13—Angad continued, 'You are a king of demons and I am a servant (subject; assistant; subordinate; in the service of) of Sugriv who is himself a humble servant of Lord Ram. Even a dog is valiant in his own lane (i.e. in his area). Don't you feel ashamed at beating your own drum (i.e. bragging) in front of me? If I had not been afraid of breaking my Lord's orders, (which was just to make you see reason and avoid the calamitous war), I would have crushed (i.e. broken and dismembered your body of) all your 10 heads and 20 arms. Regard me as the son of Bali only when I crush your army in the battle-field like a lion crushes an elephant.' [6/13]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/14—

कोसलराजके काज हौं आजु त्रिकूट उपारि, लै बारिधि बोरौं ।
 महाभुजदंड द्वै अंडकटाह चपेटकीं चोट चटाक दै फोरौं ॥1
 आयस भंगतैं जौं न डरौं, सब मीजि सभासद श्रोनित घोरौं ।
 बालि को बालकु जौं, 'तुलसी' दसहू मुख के रन में रद तोरौं ॥2 [6/14]

Verse no. 6/14—'For the sake of Lord Ram's work, I am capable of uprooting this Mt. Trikoot (on which was established the city of Lanka) and dumping it into the ocean. Not only Lanka, I can smash to smithereens the entire Universe with my two arms (1); if I had not feared the curse of breaking Lord Ram's orders (not to harm you), I would have squeezed your councilors and soak them in their blood. If I am the true son of Bali, I'll break the teeth of all your 10 heads in the battle.' [6/14]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/15—

अति कोपसों रोप्यो है पाउ सभाँ, सब लंक ससंकित, सोरु मचा।
 तमके घननाद-से बीर प्रचारि कै, हारि निसाचर-सैनु पचा।।1
 न टरै पगु मेरुहु तें गरु भो, सो मनो महि संग बिरंचि रचा।
 'तुलसी' सब सूर सराहत हैं, जग में बलसालि है बालि-बचा।।2 [6/15]

Verse no. 6/15—Furious, Angad firmly and resolutely put down his feet in the center of the assembly. This created a furore in all the directions in Lanka, and all the demons became suspicious. Warriors like Meghnad got up with a start and challenge, tried their best to move Angad's feet and push him, but returned to their seats after being unable to move the leg even a fraction of a measure. The entire demon army charged, but the leg did not budge from its position even a fraction (1). It became heavier than Mt. Sumeru as if it was grafted to the earth by Lord Brahma at the time of creation! Tulsidas says that all the warriors began to praise Angad as the only brave in this world (2). [6/15]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/16—

रोप्यो पाउ पैज कै, बिचारि रघुबीर बलु
 लागे भट समिति, न नेकु टसकतु है।।
 तज्यो धीरू-धरनीं, धरनीधर धसकत,
 धराधरू धीर भारु सहि न सकतु है।।
 महाबली बालिकें दबत दलकति भूमि,
 'तुलसी' उछलि सिंधु, मेरु मसकतु है।।3
 कमठ कठिन पीठि घट्ठा पर्यो मंदरको,
 आयो सोई काम, पै करेजो कसकतु है।।4 [6/16]

Verse no. 6/16—Remembering Lord Ram's strength, Angad had planted his legs on the ground. Warriors tried to lift it collectively, but could not move it an inch (1). Even earth lost courage, mountains subsided, and most courageous Sesh Nath could not bear its (leg's) burden (2). By the pressure exerted by the great warrior Angad, son of Bali, the earth shook, the ocean had tides, and Mt. Meru cracked (3). The legendary tortoise could bear the burden of his legs thanks to the wart on his back (formed at the time of churning of the ocean by Gods and Demons) which bore the brunt of its pressure; otherwise, even his heart sank (4). [6/16]

[Note—The episode of Angad's ambassadorial assignment has been dealt with in some details to show that (1) Lord Ram tried his best to avoid war and solve the issue peacefully; (2) that, like Hanuman in Sundar Kand, Angad had tried his best to convince Ravana to shun confrontationist attitude, but he wouldn't listen; (3) that the deeds of the two chief monkeys in Lord Ram's camp had broken the morale of Lanka's army prior to the actual start of war and thereby aiding in its defeat and total rout; and (4) disguised as messenger, they could spy and reconnoiter the opposite camp's alertness, lay-out, strength, army-armour etc., and

sow a seed of dissension and anger in the citizens against their king, almost to the point of revolt.]

Ram Charit Manas:

हाहाकार भयउ पुरभारी । रोवहीं बालक आतुर नारी ॥४
सब मिली देहि रावनहीं गारी । राज करत एहिं मृत्यु हँकारी ॥५ [6/42/4-5]

The city burst into howls and wails of angry and distressed inhabitants who abused Ravana collectively. Eager women and children cried. They all accused Ravana of inviting death and destruction while being a sovereign (i.e. a king should do things which give peace and prosperity to his subjects, but the actions of Ravana only invited death and destruction). [6/42/4-5]

{Meanwhile, Mandodari, the chief queen of Ravana, made a last ditch attempt to dissuade her husband from entering a devastating war for no worthwhile reason. But she failed. Her entreaties have been beautifully narrated in Kavitawali, verse nos. 6/17—6/29. It ought to be noted that Mandodari had tried twice to persuade Ravana to desist from war. First it was before the commencement of the war, and again in the middle of it. Here we shall quote from Kavitawali, while later on from Geetawali.}

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/17—

कनकगिरिसुंग चढ़ि देखि मर्कटकटकु,
बदत मंदोदरी परम भीता ।
सहस्रभुज-मत्तगजराज-रनकेसरी
परसुधर गर्बु जेहि देखि बीता ॥
दास तुलसी समरसूर कोसलधनी,
ख्याल ही बालि बलसालि जीता ।
रे कंत! तून दंत गहि 'सरन श्रीरामु' कहि,
अजहुँ एहि भाँति लै सौँपु सीता ॥१७॥

Verse no. 6/17—Mounting the top of the 'Mountain of Gold', Mandodari beheld the army of monkeys and became terribly afraid and upset. She said to her husband Ravana, 'Parashuram was very proud of his invincibility and strength, and he had even subdued Shahastrabahu (a demon with one thousand arms) in the battle-field just like a lion subdues an elephant. But even he (Parashuram) was himself subdued when he faced the Lord of Kaushal (Ram) of whom Tulsidas is a humble servant.

Look, the same Lord as arrived on the battlefield with immense strength and powerful force. Look, he had conquered the brave and strong Bali playfully (i.e. without effort). Oh dear husband! I advise that you should even now put a straw between your teeth and take Sita and surrender her to Sri Ram, pleading 'I have come to take refuge before you'. [6/17]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/18—

रे नीच ! मारीचु बिचलाइ, हति ताइका,
 भंजि सिवचापु सुखु सबहि दीन्हो ।
 सहस दसचारि खल सहित खर-दूषनहि,
 पैठे जमधाम, तैं तउ न चीन्हो ॥
 मैं जो कहौं, कंत ! सुनु मंतु भगवंतसों
 बिमुख है बालि फलु कौन लीन्हो ।
 बीस भुज, दस सीस खीस गए तबहिं जब,
 ईसके ईससों बैरु कीन्हो ॥ 18 ॥

Verse no. 6/18—‘Oh you evil one! Have you still not recognised him who has punished Marich (by using a head-less arrow, he threw Marich beyond the ocean), killed demoness Tadka, gave pleasure to everyone by breaking the bow of Lord Shiva (at Janakpur) and then killed Khar-Dushan along with his 14 thousand strong army of demons?

Oh Lord! Listen to my advice. What fruit (benefit) did Bali get by opposing the Lord (God)? All your 10 heads and 20 arms were deemed to have been destroyed the moment you had decided to oppose and creat enmity with the Lord of Shiva (Sri Ram).’
 [6/18]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/19—

बालि दलि, काल्हि जलजान पाषान किये,
 कंत ! भगवंतु तैं तउ न चीन्हें ।
 बिपुल बिकराल भट भालु-कपि काल-से,
 संग तरु तुंग गिरिसुंग लीन्हें ॥
 आइगो कोसलाधीसु तुलसीस जेहि
 छत्र मिस मौलि दस दूरि कीन्हें ।
 ईस बकसीस जनि खीस करु, ईस! सुनु,
 अजहुँ कुलकुसल बैदेहि दीन्हें ॥ 19 ॥

Verse no. 6/19—‘It happened just yesterday (i.e. recently) that he (Lord Ram) had slayed Bali and constructed a float (a floating bridge) of stones on the surface of the ocean.

Oh Lord! Still you do not recognise that he is not an ordinary human but a divine Lord (Bhagwan; literally meaning Lord). With him are numerous death-like ferocious bears and monkeys, carrying huge trees and large mountains (as armaments), and who had symbolically pierced your 10 heads when his single arrow had toppled your crowns¹.

Be warned. The same Lord of Tulsidas, Lord Sri Ram, has arrived. Oh Lord, listen. Do not destroy this gift (the kingdom of Lanka) which you have received from Lord Shiva. Still your clan’s welfare can be safe-guraded by sending back Sita to Sri Ram.’ [6/19]

[Note—¹This falling of the crowns refer to an incident before the start of the war. Lord Ram observed that the gem-studded golden crown of Ravana glittered and

dazzled as he sat on a high pedestal in the fort of Lanka. So the Lord shot an arrow which toppled all the crowns and came back to enter his quiver. This had made Ravana convulse and squirm in frustration, anger, humiliation and dismay.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/20—

सैनके कपिन को को गनै, अबुदैं
महाबलबीर हनुमान जानी ।
भूलिहै दस दिसा, सीस पुनि डोलिहैं,
कोपि रघुनाथु जब बान तानी ।।
बालिहूँ गर्बु जिय माहिँ ऐसो कियो,
मारि दहपट दियो जमकी घानी ।
कहति मंदोदरी, सुनहि रावन ! मतो,
बेगि लै देहि बैदेहि रानी ।। 20 ।।

Verse no. 6/20—‘Who can count the number of monkeys in his army? Consider them equivalent to millions of brave Hanumans. When Sri Ram would mount his arrow on the bow angrily, you would forget about the 10 directions, (over which you have lordship) and your 10 heads would tremble in fear. Even Bali had boasted like you—but he was killed by him (Ram), completely ruined and crushed in the crushing machine (literally, jaws) of death.’

Mandodari continues, ‘Oh Ravana! Listen to my advice. Go and give Sita back to Sri Ram soon.’ [6/20]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/21—

गहनु उज्जारि, पुरु जारि, सुतु मारि तव,
कुसल गो कीसु बर बैरि जाको ।
दूसरो दूतु पनु रोपि कोपेउ सभाँ,
खर्ब कियो सर्बको, गर्बु थाको ।।
दासु तुलसी सभय बदत मयनंदिनी,
मंदमति कंत, सुनु मंतु म्हाको ।
तौलौ मिलु बेगि, नहि जौलौ रन रोष भयो
दासरथि बीर बिरुदैत बाँको ।। 21 ।।

Verse no. 6/21—‘A single monkey (Hanuman) who came as a messenger of your enemy (Lord Ram) had ruined your Ashok garden, burnt your whole city, killed your son and went away unscathed. And his second messenger (Angad) made an angry vow in your court, humiliated you all and crushed your combined pride.’

Tulsidas says that Mandodari fearfully but earnestly pleaded with Ravana, ‘Oh you foolish Lord! Listen to my council. Before the most valorous, valiant and brave Lord Ram becomes angry in the battle-field (i.e. before it is too late), you must go and meet him (to strike a compromise deal and avoid the calamitous war).’ [6/21]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/22—

काननु उजारि, अच्छु मारि, धारि धूरि कीन्हीं,
 नगरु प्रजार्यो, सो बिलोक्यो बलु कीसको ।
 तुम्हें बिद्यमान जातुधानमंडलीमें कपि
 कोपि रोप्यो पाउ, सो प्रभाउ तुलसीसको ।।
 कंत ! सुनु मंतु कुल-अंतु किउँ अंत हानि,
 हातो कीजे हीयतें भरोसो भुज बीसको ।
 तौलौं मिलु बेगि जौलौं चापु न चढ़ायो राम,
 रोषि बानु काढ्यौ न दलैया दससीसको ।।22 ।।

Verse no. 6/22—‘You have already seen the strength, courage and valour of a single monkey (Hanuman)—he single handedly ruined your garden, killed Akshay Kumar and crushed his army and burnt the city. Even while you were present, the second monkey (Angad) had angrily and defiantly planted his foot firmly in the assembly of demons and no one could shake it—it was all the glorious effect of Sri Ram. Oh Lord! Listen to my advice—the destruction of the demon clan will be harmful to all (this shows that there were many inhabitants in Lanka, in the army, palace service, mistresses, concubines that were not demons by birth). Hence, you should now stop depending (relying) upon the strength of your 10-arms, and before Sri Ram mounts his bow angrily and resolutely, and his arrows pierce your 10 heads, you should soon go and meet him (to surrender and make peace).’ [6/22]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/23—

‘पवनको पृतु देख्यो दृतु बीर बाँकुरो, जो
 बंक गढु लंक-सो ढकाँ ढकेलि ढाहिगो ।
 बालि बलसालिको सो काटिह दापु दलि कोपि,
 रोप्यो पाउ चपरि, चमूको चाउ चाहिगो ।।
 सोई रघुनाथु कपि साथ पाथनाथु बाँधि,
 आयो नाथ! भागे तें खिरिखिरे खेह खाहिगो ।
 ‘तुलसी’ गरबु तजि मिलिबेको साजु सजि,
 देहि सिय, न तौ पिय! पाइमाल जाहिगो ।।23 ।।

Verse no. 6/23—‘You have already seen his messenger, the matchless warrior Pawansut (son of wind-God; Hanuman) who had demolished the invincible fort such as Lanka by a mere push, as it were. [This refers to the burning of Lanka]. Son of the brave Bali (Angad) had returned safely after he had angrily cast his foot firmly on the ground (which you couldn’t shake) and thereby crush your haughtiness and ego. Now the same Sri Ram (whose messengers did what they did as described above) has tamed and crossed the ocean along with his monkeys and landed on the soil of Lanka.

So, oh Lord, if you contemplate on running away now, you’ll have to bite dust literally. Therefore, abandon pride before it’s too late and prepare to meet him, and give Sita back. Otherwise, oh dear, you will be ruined.’ [6/23]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/24—

उदधि अपार उतरत नहिं लागी बार
 केसरीकुमारु सो अदंड-कैसो डाँड़िगो ।
 बाटिका उजारि, अच्छु, रच्छकनि मारि भट
 भारी भारी राउरेके चाउर-से काँड़िगो ॥
 'तुलसी' तिहारें बिद्यमान जुबराज आजु
 कोपि पाउ रोपि, सब छूछे कै कै छाँड़िगो ।
 कहेकी न लाज, पिय! आजहूँ न आए बाज,
 सहित समाज गढु राँड-कैसो भाँड़िगो ॥24॥

Verse no. 6/24—'See! That son of Kesari (Hanuman) crossed the vast ocean in no time and punished you and went back scot-free. He had laid to waste your Ashok garden, killed Akshay Kumar and other guards, and had beaten to pulp many of your great warriors; and even today, Angad had angrily planted his foot on the ground in your presence and left you all hollow (i.e. left all your boastful claims of strength and valour sound hollow).

Oh dear! You don't have any shame! You still do not learn (or wake-up). Today Angad has thoroughly inspected all nooks and corners of the fort as if it was a prostitute's den, and you couldn't stop him!' [6/24]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/27—

कह्यो मतु मातुल, बिभीषनहूँ बार-बार,
 आँचरु पसार पिय! पायँ लै-लै हौं परी ।
 बिदित बिदेहपुर नाथ! भृगुनाथगति,
 समय सयानी कीन्ही जैसी आइ गौं परी ॥
 बायस, बिराध, खर, दूषन, कबंध, बालि,
 बैर रघुबीरकें न पूरी काहूकी परी ।
 कंत बीस लोयन बिलोकिए कुमंतफलु,
 ख्याल लंका लाई कपि राँड़की-सी झोपरी ॥27॥

Verse no. 6/27—'Your maternal uncle (Marich) advised you; Vibhishan repeatedly asked you, and oh dear, even I had begged you again and again, falling at your feet, that you should not oppose God. Oh Lord! What was the fate of Parashuram at Janakpur is evident to all. [Hence you should not hesitate thinking that it would be inappropriate to surrender now after first creating enmity]. He (Parashuram) was clever enough to adapt himself to changed circumstances (and wise enough to surrender before Sri Ram). Jayant (the crow), Viradh, Khar, Dushan, Bali, Kabandh—none succeeded by opposing Lord Ram.

Oh Lord! The results of your evil thoughts are there before your twenty eyes to see that the monkey (Hanuman) playfully burnt Lanka as if it was a destitute whore's hut.' [6/27]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/28—

राम सों सामु किऐँ नितु है हितु, कोमल काज न कीजिए टाँटे।
 आपनि सूझि कहौँ,पिय! बूझिए, जूझिबे जोगु न ठाहरु, नाटे॥
 नाथ! सुनी भृगुनाथकथा, बलि बालि गए चलि बातके साँठे।
 भाइ बिभीषनु जाइ मिल्यो, प्रभु आइ परे सुनि सायर काँठे॥28॥

Verse no. 6/28—‘It is always beneficial to make-up (i.e., to befriend) with Sri Ram. Do not unnecessarily make difficult what is so simple a task. Oh dear! I tell you what I think is proper. Understand and realise it properly that this is the opportunity to withdraw, and not a proper place and circumstance to fight (i.e., make war). Oh Lord! You have already heard the story of Brighunath (Parashuram). The strong Bali ruined himself due to his ego. Your brother Vibhishan has also joined him (Sri Ram). Oh Lord! I hear that he has crossed the ocean and pitched his camp near the sea-shore.’ [6/28]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/29—

पालिबेको कपि-भालु-चमू जम काल करालहुको पहरी है।
 लंक-से बंक महा गढ़ दुर्गम ढाहिबे-दाहिबेको कहरी है॥
 तीतर-तोम तमीचर-सेन समीरको सूलु बड़ो बहरी है।
 नाथ! भलो रघुनाथ मिलें रजनीचर-सेन हिऐँ हहरी है॥29॥

Verse no. 6/29—‘Oh Lord! The son of Wind-God (Hanuman) can protect the army of monkeys and bears even against Yam and the terrible Kaal (God of death and hell, and Death itself), he is very mischievous (i.e., active, restless) in destroying the impregnable fort of Lanka. He is like a huge falcon for destroying the partridge-like army of demons.

Oh Lord! It is wise to meet and make friendship with Sri Ram now, for the demon army’s morale has been broken and it’s shuddering in its heart.’ [6/29]

{When all attempts to avoid the bloodshed failed, the war actually began. Now, let us read to see what happened in that war.}

The Lord Sri Ram -- Ravana War: Ram Charit Manas

रिपु के समाचार जब पाए । राम सचिव सब निकट बोलाए ॥1
 लंका बाँके चारि दुआरा । केहि बिधि लागिअ करहु बिचारा ॥2
 तब कपीस रिच्छेस बिभीषन । सुमिरि हृदयँ दिनकर कुल भूषन ॥3
 करि बिचार तिन्ह मंत्र दृढ़ावा । चारि अनी कपि कटकु बनावा ॥4
 जथाजोग सेनापति कीन्हे । जूथप सकल बोलि तब लीन्हे ॥5
 प्रभु प्रताप कहि सब समुझाए । सुनि कपि सिंघनाद करि धाए ॥6
 हरषित राम चरन सिर नावहिं । गहि गिरि सिखर बीर सब धावहिं ॥7
 गर्जहिं तर्जहिं भालु कपीसा । जय रघुबीर कोसलाधीसा ॥8
 जानत परम दुर्ग अति लंका । प्रभु प्रताप कपि चले असंका ॥9

घटाटोप करि चहुँ दिसि घेरी । मुखहिं निसान बजावहिं भेरी ॥10 [6/39/1-10]
 दोहा- जयति राम जय लछिमन जय कपीस सुग्रीव ।
 गर्जहि सिंघनाद कपि भालु महा बल सीव ॥ [Doha 6/39.]

The D-day arrived. [It was the day next to the day Angad went as an ambassador, and the 3rd or 4th day from the day Lord Ram landed on the soil of Lanka with his army]. Lord Ram summoned all his councillors after hearing from Angad all the news about the enemy (1).

The Lord said, 'Lanka has four gates. So decide how we should launch the attack (2).'

The senior most ministers, i.e. Sugriv, Jamvant and Vibhishan, discussed and decided upon a definite plan for the assault (3). They divided the army into four brigades, and each was put under an efficient and expert commander. The army was then paraded (4), the glory and might of Lord Ram was explained to them (as a morale booster) and ordered to advance. The monkeys roared forward like lions (5-6). They were thrilled, bowed their heads at the feet of Lord Ram, and with uprooted mountain-peaks (huge boulders) in their hands, charged forward (7).

Shouting and thundering Lord Ram's glory, they assumed a threatening proposition (8) and even though they knew Lanka to be an impregnable fort, still inspired by the strength of Lord Ram, they moved on un-daunted (9) and surrounded the fort from all sides like dark clouds spreading over the horizon from all sides. Their shouts resembled beating of drums and kettle-drums/ trumpets (10) [6/ 39/1-10].

The monkeys and bears roared like numerous lions ready to pounce on the prey, as it were [Doha 6/39].

लंकाँ भयउ कोलाहल भारी । सुना दसानन अति अहँकारी ॥1
 देखहु बनरन्ह केरि ढिठाई । बिहँसि निसाचर सेन बोलाई ॥2
 आए कीस काल के प्रेरे । छुधावंत सब निसिचर मेरे ॥3
 अस कहि अट्हास सठ कीन्हा । गृह बैठें अहार बिधि दीन्हा ॥4
 सुभट सकल चारिहुँ दिसि जाहू । धरि धरि भालु कीस सब खाहू ॥5
 उमा रावनहिं अस अभिमाना । जिमि टिटिटिभ खग सूत उताना ॥6
 चले निसाचर आयसु मागी । गहि कर भिंडिपाल बर साँगी ॥7
 तोमर मुद्गर परसु प्रचंडा । सूल कृपान परिघ गिरिखंडा ॥8
 जिमि अरुनोपल निकर निहारी । धावहिं सठ खग मांस अहारी ॥9
 चोंच भंग दुख तिन्हहि न सूझा । तिमि धाए मनुजाद अबूझा ॥10 [6/40/1-10]
 दोहा- नानायुध सर चाप धर जातुधान बल बीर ।
 कोट कैंगूरन्ह चढ़ि गए कोटि कोटि रनधीर ॥ [Doha 6/40.]

The launch of assault by Lord Ram's army brought on an uproar in Lanka. Ravana heard of the turmoil and said haughtily (1), 'Look at the fool-hardiness of these monkeys.'

Saying this, he summoned the demon army (2), 'Driven by fate, the monkeys are coming to die, oh my hungry warriors (3).'

The idiot (Ravana) laughed haughtily, 'God has given us meal even at our homes without the least effort (4). Oh you champions! Go in every direction, catch hold of these monkeys and fill your appetite (5).'

Lord Shiva tells his consort Uma (Parvati) that Ravana's false pride was as great as that of the sandpiper, which goes to sleep with its legs in the air and thinks that, should the sky fall on it while asleep, it would hold it aloft with its legs (6). The demons charged forward, armed with slings, javelins, iron, clubs, maces, axes, spikes, lancets, swords, rocks etc. in their raised hands (8). As foolish carnivorous birds swoop down on a heap of rubies on seeing them from the sky as they have no idea that they would break their beaks by dashing against them, so did the man-eating demons rushed forward, mad in their foolishness. (9-10) [6/40/1-10].

Armed thus, with weapons of all sorts, the vast cloud (multitudes) of defiant and valiant demons climbed up the battlements and ramparts of the fort of Lanka [Doha 6/40].

कटकटाहिं कोटिन्ह भट गर्जहिं । दसन ओठ काटहिं अति तर्जहिं ॥6
उत रावन इत राम दोहाई । जयति जयति जय परी लराई ॥7 [6/41/6-7]

Gnashing their teeth and biting their lips, numerous warriors on both sides roared, jeered and bullied each other, invoking the name of their respective Lords (Ram or Ravana) (6). With shouts of Victory, the fighting actually (finally) commenced (7). [6/41/6-7]

The Demon-Monkey War: Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/30—

रोष्यो रन रावनु, बोलाय बीर बानइत,
जानत जे रीति सब संजुग समाजकी ।
चली चतुरंग चमू, चपरि हने निसान,
सेना सराहन जोग रातिचरराजकी ॥
तुलसी बिलोकि कपि-भालु किलकत
ललकत लखि ज्यो कँगाल पातरी सुनाजकी ।
रामरुख निरखि हरष्यो हिचै हनूमानु,
मानो खेलवार खोली सीसताज बाजकी ॥30 ॥

Verse no. 6/30—Then Ravana angrily summoned very famous and able warriors who were experts in the art of warfare. All the four arms of the demon army (infantry, armour, cavalry, elephants) started for the battle-front as the war-drums suddenly sounded the battle-cry, chillingly and loudly. The demon army of Ravana looked most magnificent and awe-inspiring at that moment.

Tulsidas says that seeing them, the monkeys and bears laughed derisively and merrily as if beggars greedily look at platters full of delicious food. On a signal from Lord Ram, Hanuman became excited as if a hunter had opened the cage of the falcon (and given it freedom to hunt its prey). [6/30]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/31—

साजि कै सनाह-गजनाह सउछाह दल,
 महाबली धाए बीर जातुधान धीरके ।।
 इहाँ भालु-बंदर बिसाल मेरु-मंदर-से
 लिए सैल-साल तोरि नीरनिधितीरके ।।2
 तुलसी तमकि-ताकि भिरे भारी जुद्ध क्रुद्ध,
 सेनप सराहे निज निज भट भीरके ।3
 रंडनके झुंड झूमि-झूमि झुकरे-से नाचैं,
 समर सुमार सूर मारैं रघुबीरके ।।4

Verse no. 6/31—The courageous Ravana's great warriors advanced armed with shields and supported by war-elephants (1). Here, large monkeys, who were as huge as Mt. Sumeru and Mt. Mandar, uprooted mountains and Shal Trees from near the sea shore (2).

Tulsidas says that then both the groups, full of anger, faced each other, and roaring loudly clashed with each other furiously. The commanders encouraged the warriors under their respective commands (3). The bodies, whose heads were cut (headless trunks) begin to totter and swoon but refused to fall, so excited was their blood; and Lord Ram's champion warriors began to hit hard at the enemy in the battle (4). [6/31]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/32—

तीखे तुरंग कुरंग सुरंगनि साजि चढ़े छँटि छैल छबीले ।
 भारी गुमान जिन्हें मनमें, कबहूँ न भए रनमें तन ढीले ।।1
 तुलसी लखि कै गज केहरि ज्यों झपटे, पटके सब सूर सलीले ।
 भूमि परे भट भूमि कराहत, हाँकि हने हनुमान हठीले ।।2 [6/32]

Verse no. 6/32—Those who were very proud of their bravery and courage, whose bodies never relaxed (i.e. were ever eager to fight and engage themselves in robust activity)—such warriors mounted horses as swift as deer. Fully prepared to go into battle, the cavalry brigade charged (1).

Tulsidas says even as a lion leaps at an elephant at the sight of it, so did Hanuman leapt forward and playfully began to knock the cavalry down, and they swooned, fell to the ground and wailed. This way the adamant Hanuman started slaying the demons by repeatedly challenging them. [6/32]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/33—

सूर सँजोइल साजि सुबाजि, सुसेल धरैं बगमेल चले हैं ।
 भारी भुजा भारी, भारी सरीर, बली बिजयी सब भाँति भले हैं ।।
 'तुलसी' जिन्ह धाएँ धुकै धरनी, धरनीधर धौर धकान हले हैं ।

ते रज-तीक्ष्ण लक्ष्मण लाक्ष्मण दानि ज्यो दारिद्र दाबि दले हैं ।।33।।

Verse no. 6/33—Famous and valiant warriors mounted decorated horses, were armed with sharp spears, and rode to the battle in close formation. They had big muscular arms and well-built bodies, and they appeared attractive, brave and victorious by all means. Tulsidas says that lakhs of artful and witty warriors, who shook the earth when they ran and the mountains swayed when pushed by them, were defeated and destroyed by Laxman in the battle-field as if a great donor eliminates poverty by immense charity. [6/33]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/34—

गहि मंदर बंदर-भालु चले, सो मनो उनये घन सावनके ।
 'तुलसी' उत झुंड प्रचंड झुके, झपटै भट जे सुरदावनके ।।
 बिरुझे बिरुदैत जे खेत अरे, न टरे हठि बैरु बढावनके ।
 रन मारि मची उपरी-उपरा भलें बीर रघुपति रावनके ।।2 [6/34]

Verse no. 6/34—The monkeys and bears charged forward, armed with mountains in their hands. The two armies looked like two huge banks of thick black clouds appearing on the horizon simultaneously.

Tulsidas says that at the same time, the multitudes of demons who could instill fear in the hearts of Gods, also charged and yelled (1). Numerous famed warriors of Ravana, who had stood staunchly in the battle-field, clashed with each other because they were literally itching for a fight with anyone who came their way. They were stubborn and resolute, and refused to move or yield their ground. The warriors of Ram and Ravana crowded and swirled around each other as furious and no-holds-barred battle ensued (2). [6/34]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/35—

सर-तोमर सेलसमूह पँवारत, मारत बीर निसाचरके ।
 इत तें तरु-ताल-तमाल चले, खर खंड प्रचंड महीधरके ।।
 'तुलसी' करि केहरिनादु भिरे भट, खग खगे, खपुआ खरके ।
 नख-दंतन सों भुजदंड बिहंडत, मुंडसों मुंड परे झरकैं ।।2[6/35]

Verse no. 6/35—Ravana's warriors are using arrows, spikes and mountains for the attack, and on this side (Ram's side) they are being repulsed with uprooted Tal and Tamaal Trees (both having stout and long stems), and large boulders which are sharp and pointed (1).

Tulsidas says all the warriors roared like a lion and clashed. The brave plunged in the sea of swords while the cowards stealthily slithered away. The monkeys are piercing the arrows of the demons with their teeth and claws, while the severed heads of the brave lie on the ground and insult each other (2). [6/35]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/36—

रजनीचर-मत्तगयंद-घटा बिघटै मृगराजके साज लरै ।
झपटै भट कोटि महीं पटकै, गरजै, रघुबीर की सौंह करै ।।।
तुलसी उत हाँक दसाननु देत, अचेत भे बीर, को धीर धरै ।
बिरुझो रन मारुत को बिरुदैत, जो कालहु कालुसो बूझि परै ।।2 [6/36]

Verse no. 6/36—Hanuman destroys the demon army like a lion amongst mad and wild elephants. [A single lion can create havoc in a group of wild elephants. Hanuman is compared to this lion.] He leaps and dashes numerous warriors to the ground and raises the cry of Lord Ram's name (1).

Tulsidas says Ravana raises war cries from the opposite side, hearing which the monkeys become unconscious out of fear- who can have courage to withstand that ferocious challenge of Ravana? The champion-of-all Hanuman, seeing the monkeys unconscious and losing ground against the enemy, rushed and crashed in the enemy so furiously that even the God of death trembled out of fear (2). [6/36]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/37—

जे रजनीचर बीर बिसाल, कराल बिलोकत काल न खाए ।
ते रन-रोर कपीसकिसोर बड़े बरजोर परे फग पाये ।।
लूम लपेटि, अकास निहारि कै, हाँकि हठी हनुमान चलाए ।
सूखि गे गात, चले नभ जात, परे भ्रमबात, न भूतल आए ।।37 ।।

Verse no. 6/37—Those huge, war-hardened and brave demon warriors whom even death could not eat (i.e. kill) out of fear of their ferocity (death was afraid to go near them), were caught by the son of Kesari (Hanuman) in his trap, who challenged them contemptibly, and then coiling them in his tail, he flung them skywards. The demons' bodies shriveled (shrank) in fear and they kept on flying upwards (as if caught in a tornado and sucked upwards or moved upwards in a spiral of air), and they never returned to earth (it is said that the comets and other cosmic debris originated from this incident). [6/37]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/38—

जो दससीसु महीधर ईसको बीस भुजा खुलि खेलनिहारो ।
लोकप, दिग्गज, दानव, देव सबै सहमे सुनि साहसु भारो ।।।
बीर बड़ो बिरुदैत बली, अजहूँ जग जागत जासु पँवारो ।
सो हनुमान हन्यो मुठिकाँ गिरि गो गिरिराजु ज्यों गाजको मारो ।।2 [6/38]

Verse no. 6/38—Ravana, who could uproot the abode of Lord Shiva, Mt. Kailash, with his 20 arms and play with it unhindered and without qualms; even the Gods, demons and guardians of all the directions of the Universe (Dikpals) were afraid of whose strength and courage (1); who was very brave and immensely courageous and whose fame is still being sung in the world, the same Ravana fell to the ground on being punched by the clenched fists of Hanuman as if a huge mountain crashes on being hit by thunderbolt (2). [6/38]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/39—

दुर्गम दुर्ग, पहाटों भारे, प्रचंड महा भुजदंड बने हैं ।
लक्खमें पक्खर, तिक्खन तेज, जे सूरसमाजमें गाज गने हैं ॥
ते बिरुदैत बली रजबाँकुरे हाँकि हठी हनुमान हने हैं ।
नामु लै रामु देखावत बंधुको घूमत घायल घायँ घने हैं ॥39॥

Verse no. 6/39—Those demon warriors, whose arms are more invincible than an impregnable fortress and are larger than mountains, those who are ace among countless warriors and whose valour and energy are very famous and matchless, and those who are considered as 'lightening' among the society of warriors—all those famous veterans, war-hardened, valorous, valiant and brave demon warriors were slayed by a stubborn Hanuman. Some of them who did not die, but were seriously wounded and roamed in the battle-field, were shown to Laxman by Lord Ram and identified by their individual names. [This shows that Lord Ram was well acquainted with the individual commanders, senior warriors and braves of the demon army.] [6/39]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/40—

हाथिन सों हाथी मारे, घोरेसों सँघारे घोरे,
रथनि सों रथ बिदरनि बलवान की ॥1
चंचल चपेट, चोट चरन चकोट चाहें,
हहरानी फौजें भरानी जातुधानकी ॥2
बार-बार सेवक-सराहना करत रामु,
'तुलसी' सराहै रीति साहेब सुजान की ॥3
लाँबी लूम लसत, लपेटि पटकत भट,
देखौ देखौ, लखन ! लरनि हनुमान की ॥4 [6/40]

Verse no. 6/40—Hanuman dashed elephants against elephants, killed horses by swinging other horses against them, crashed chariots against chariots and broke them into splinters (1). The demon army staggered and swooned when it was punched, bitten, kicked and thrashed by Hanuman (2).

Lord Ram again and again (repeatedly) praised the astounding valour and the magnificent feats of Hanuman, and said, 'Look, Laxman! Just have a look at the expertise

in war of dear Hanuman. How marvelous his tail looks, by which he entraps the demons and dashes them against the ground.'

Tulsidas also praises the affection of his Lord towards his devoted servants (Hanuman) (3-4). [6/40]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/41—

दबकि दबोरे एक, बारिधि में बोरे एक,
मगन महीमें, एक गगन उड़ात हैं ।।1
पकरि पछारे कर, चरन उखारे एक,
चीरि-फारि डारे, एक मीजि मारे लात हैं ।।2
'तुलसी' लखत, रामु, रावनु, बिबुध, बिधि,
चक्रपानि, चंडीपति, चंडिका सिहात हैं ।।3
बड़े-बड़े बानइत बीर बलवान बड़े,
जातुधान, जूथप निपाते बातजात हैं ।।4 [6/41]

Verse no. 6/41—He (Hanuman) squeezed someone stealthily, drowned some in the ocean, buried others in the earth, flung some in the air (1), dashed someone by the hands, tore the legs from the trunk of still others, lacerated and tore-apart the flesh here and ground some one with his legs there (2).

Tulsidas says that, watching him in action, Lord Ram, Ravana, Gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Chandi began to praise him and his skills in their hearts (3). Hanuman killed the great commanders and the famed warriors of the demon army (4). [6/41]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/42—

प्रबल प्रचंड बरिबंड बाहुदंड बीर
धाए जातुधान, हनुमानु लियो घेरि कै ।
महाबलपुंज कुंजरारि ज्यो गरजि, भट
जहाँ-तहाँ पटके लँगूर फेरि-फेरि कै ।
मारे लात, तोरे गात, भागे जात हाहा खात,
कहैं, 'तुलसीस ! राखि' रामकी सौं टेरे कै ।
ठहर-ठहर परे, कहरि-कहरि उठैं,
हहरि-हहरि हरु सिद्ध हँसे हेरे कै ।।42।।

Verse no. 6/42—Then, those demons whose arm's strength were very potent and violent and others who were very brave, strong and ferocious, rushed forward and surrounded Hanuman on all sides. But Hanuman, who was a fountain of immense valour and bravery, roared like a lion and dashed those demon warriors to the ground everywhere by swinging his stern tail repeatedly. He broke and crushed the bones of the demons by his kicks and blows. They ran away pleading and crying in plight, and invoking the name of Lord Ram, they beseeched Hanuman to spare them and protect them. Lying scattered

here and there, they moaned in agony and tried to raise themselves; Lord Shiva and mystics laughed heartily on seeing their condition. [6/42]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/43—

जाकी बाँकी बीरता सुनत सहमत सूर,
जाकी आँच अबद्ध लसत लंक लाह-सी।
सोई हनुमान बलवान बाँको बानइत,
जोहि जातुधान-सेना चल्थो लेत थाह-सी।।
कंपत अकंपन, सुखाय अतिकाय काय,
कुंभऊकरन आइ रह्यो पाइ आह-सी।
देखें गजराज मृगराजु ज्यो गरजि धायो,
बीर रघुबीरको समीरसूनु साहसी।।43।।

Verse no. 6/43—He, hearing whose peerless bravery even brave warriors feel afraid (to face him) and Lanka appears like red hot ambers from the fire which he had ignited—the same brave and strong Hanuman moved about, as if trying to measure the strength of the demons' army. At that moment, Ravana's son 'Akampan' (literally meaning one who never shakes) began to tremble and shake (out of fear), the body of 'Atikaya' (literally one who has an extra large body) shriveled and shrunk, and even Kumbhakaran came and exclaimed in surprise, and felt dejected. Like a lion rushes towards a herd of elephants, Lord Ram's brave and courageous son of Pawan (Hanuman) roared and rushed at them immediately on sighting them. [6/43]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/44—

मत्त-भट-मुकुट, दसकंठ-साहस-सइल-
सुंग-बिदरनि जनु बज्र-टाँकी।
दसन धरि धरनि चिक्करत दिग्गज, कमटु,
सेषु संकुचित, संकित पिनाकी।।
चलत महि-मेरु, उच्छलत सायर सकल,
बिकल बिधि बधिर दिसि-बिदिसि झाँकी।
रजनिचर-घरनि घर गर्भ-अर्भक स्रवत,
सुनत हनुमानकी हाँक बाँकी।।44।।

Verse no. 6/44—Hearing the terrible war-cry of Hanuman—who is like the strike of Bajra (thunderbolt) for crushing the pinnacle of the mountain representing the strength of Ravana, who is the most exalted among the furious and wild demon warriors—the Digpals (custodians of the directions) clasped the earth in their teeth and shrieked; the legendary tortoise and serpent wriggled, squirmed and shriveled out of fear; Lord Shiva became doubtful; the earth and Mt. Sumeru became uneasy and shook; all the seven seas heaved, bounced, buffeted and splashed; Brahma became agitated, worried and nervous and started peering in all the directions (to ascertain the fate of his creation); and the pregnant demonesses aborted in all the house-holds of Lanka. [6/44]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/45—

कौनकी हाँकपर चौक चंडीसु, बिधि,
 चंडकर थकित फिरि तुरग हाँके ।
 कौनके तेज बलसीम भट भीम-से
 भीमता निरखि कर नयन ढाँके ।।
 दास-तुलसीसके बिरुद बरनत बिदुष,
 बीर बिरुदैत बर बैरि धाँके ।
 नाक नरलोक पाताल कोउ कहत किन
 कहाँ हनुमानु-से बीर बाँके ।।45 ।।

Verse no. 6/45—On whose war-cry do Brahma and Shiva become alarmed and stunned, while the sun has to spur the horses of his chariot once again (because they had stopped in their track out of fear)?

Who is he whose blinding splendour and dazzling shine forced warriors like Bhimsen to close their eyes with their hands? [This refers to the Mahabharat war when Hanuman sat atop the war chariot of Arjun, and it is believed that it was Hanuman who led Arjun to his victory in the war. Bhimsen was a very strong warrior of the opposite camp. Here it means that Bhimsen was dazed when he saw Hanuman sitting on the chariot, and he lost all hopes of ever defeating Arjun who was protected by Hanuman. The splendour and shine are metaphors for Hanuman's great fame and majestic glory as an invincible warrior that made his enemies wince and close their eyes out of his fear.]

Wise people sing the valour and glory of Tulsidas' Lord (Hanuman) and say that he has established his majestic fame and stupendous glory over his well-known enemies who were famed for their strength and valour. Can anyone say that there is anyone who can be compared to Hanuman in bravery and strength in the heaven, on the earth and in the subterranean worlds? [6/45]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/46—

जातुधानावली-मत्तकुंजरघटा
 निरखि मृगराजु ज्यों गिरितें दूख्यो ।
 बिकट चटकन चोट,चरन गहि, पटक महि,
 निघटि गए सुभट, सतु सबको छूख्यो ।।
 'दास तुलसी' परत धरनि धरकत, झुकत
 हाट-सी उठति जंबुकनि लूख्यो ।
 धीर रघुबीरको बीर रनबाँकुरो
 हाँकि हनुमान कुलि कटकु कूख्यो ।।46 ।।

Verse no. 6/46—Hanuman pounced on demons like a lion jumps upon a herd of wild elephants from the top of a mountain. All the warriors became hopeless and lost their courage and strength on being smitten by Hanuman's slaps and were dashed to ground by their legs. Tulsidas says that the earth shivered (shook) when the warriors fell on it, and jackals snatched at and ran away dragging falling warriors like robbers loot bulging purses in a market place. Lord Ram's brave and courageous warrior Hanuman repeatedly challenged the army of demons and crushed/beat them to pulp with great agility and ferocity. [6/46]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/47—

कतहुँ बिटप-भूधर उपारि परसेन बरषत ।
 कतहुँ बाजिसौं बाजि मर्दि, गजराज करषत ॥
 चरनचोट चटकन चकोट अरि-उर-सिर बज्जत ।
 बिकट कटकु बिद्वरत बीरु बारिदु जिमि गज्जत ॥
 लंगूर लपेटत पटकि भट, 'जयति राम, जय!' उच्चरत ।
 तुलसीस पवननंदनु अटल जुद्ध क्रुद्ध कौतुक करत ॥47॥

Verse no. 6/47—Somewhere he (Hanuman) uproots trees and mountains, and showers them on the enemies' army; elsewhere, he crushes horses against horses and kills elephants by dragging them on the ground and then dashing them on it. The thud of his slaps and kicks on the chest and heads of the enemy resound and reverberate in the battle-field. That brave warrior (Hanuman) thunders like a cloud while slaying the formidable army of demons. He shouts 'Jai Ram, Jai Ram!' while dashing the demon warriors to the ground by wrapping his tail around their legs. In this way, the Lord of Tulsidas, son of wind God (Hanuman) performs wondrous and marvelous war-deeds in the battle-field. [6/47]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/48—

अंग-अंग दलित ललित फूले किंसुक-से
 हने भट लाखन लखन जातुधानके ॥
 मारि कै, पछारि कै, उपारि भुजदंड चंड,
 खंडि-खंडि डारे ते बिदारे हनुमानके ॥2
 कूदत कबंध के कदम्ब बंब-सी करत,
 धावत दिखावत हैं लाघौ राघौबानके ॥3
 तुलसी महेसु, बिधि, लोकपाल, देवगन,
 देखत बेवान चढ़े कौतुक मसानके ॥4 [6/48]

Verse no. 6/48—Multitudes of Ravana's warriors were wounded by Laxman's attack, and they appeared red like a blossoming Kapas flower (the flower is red, so the demons resembled it because of blood oozing and smearing their bodies, making it appear red) (1); some of the warriors were killed, dashed to the ground, their arms torn away from the trunk, punctured and lacerated and thrown away (2). Groups of Kabandhs¹ jumped and skipped about shouting "Bung-Bung" in the battle-field, as if showing the rapidity of Lord Ram's arrows (3).

Tulsidas says that Shiva, Brahma, the eight Lokpals (8 guardians of the world) and other Gods rode their chariots and watched the proceeding of the battle field from the sky (4) [6/48].

[Note—¹The Kabandh is a special category of hobgoblin who has only trunk but no head or legs. Legend has it that Indra had punched the head and legs of a demon called Danu with his thunderbolt inside its trunk, as a result its body was reduced to only a trunk with a large mouth and protruding long arms.]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/49—

लोथिन सों लोहूके प्रबाह चले जहाँ-तहाँ
 मानहुँ गिरिन्ह गेरु झरना झरत हैं ।
 श्रोनितसरित घोर कुंजर-करारे भारे,
 कूलतें समूल बाजि-बिटप परत हैं ॥
 सुभट-सरीर नीर-चारी भारी-भारी तहाँ,
 सूरनि उछाहु, कूर कादर डरत हैं ।
 फेकरि-फेकरि फेरु फारि-फारि पेट खात
 काक-कंक बालक कोलाहलु करत हैं ॥ 49 ॥

Verse no. 6/49—Streams of blood flowed from the lacerated flesh of the warriors every where in the battle-field as if red water oozes from the crevices in the mountains. A huge river of blood started flowing; the elephants formed the embankments of that river, and dead horses falling in the stream of blood resembled the trees on the banks of a river which are uprooted and tumble in it. The dead bodies of the warriors are like the different aquatic creatures of that river of blood. That scene greatly excites and thrills brave warriors, but cowards and impotent people become scared, turn pale and swivel in horror. Jackals howl and tear apart the entrails to eat, while crows, vultures etc. cheer in mirth like happy children enjoying themselves at play. [6/49]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/50—

ओझरीकी झोरी काँधें, आँतिनिकी सेल्ही बाँधें,
 मूँड़के कमंडल खपर किएँ कोरि कै ।
 जोगिनी झुटुंग झुंड-झुंड बनीं तापसी-सी
 तीर-तीर बैठीं सो समर-सरि खोरि कै ॥
 श्रोनित सों सानि-सानि गूदा खात सतुआ-से
 प्रेत एक पिअत बहोरि घोरि-घोरि कै ।
 'तुलसी' बैताल-भूत साथ लिए भूतनाथु,
 हेरि-हेरि हँसत हैं हाथ-हाथ जोरि कै ॥ 50 ॥

Verse no. 6/50—With bags made of emptied or hollowed out stomach hung around their shoulders, intestines used as a sling to tie them, and hollowed (scooped) out skulls used as pots (to collect blood), numerous groups of Joginis (spirits who roam battle-fields and drink blood) appear to have taken a ritualistic bath in the river of war, and are currently sitting on the banks of the river-of-blood to rest a while like so many hermitresses. They are kneading fresh flesh with blood and eating it like 'Sattu' (baked gram flour which is

kneaded into dough with water and eaten as a meal with salt, spices, chillies etc.), while some spirits and ghosts dilute it with blood and drink it in a semi-fluid form.

Tulsidas says that the Lord of ghosts, phantoms and spirits called 'Bhutnath', accompanied by ghosts and phantoms, is laughing merrily hand-in-hand with his companions. [Such a horrific and blood-curdling scene of the battle-field is indeed remarkable in portrayal.] [6/50]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/51—

राम सरासन तें चले तीर रहे न सरीर, हड़ावरि फूटी ।
 रावन धीर न पीर गनी, लखि लै कर खप्पर जोगिनी जूटीं ॥1
 श्रोनि-छीट छटानि जटे तुलसी प्रभु सोहैं महा छबि छूटीं ।
 मानो मरक्कत-सैल बिसालमें फैलि चलीं बर बीरबहूटीं ॥2 [6/51]

Verse no. 6/51—The arrows shot from Lord Ram's bow do not stop anywhere; they penetrate the bones of Ravana and escape from the other side of his body. Still, the brave and courageous Ravana pays no heed to the pain (caused by this severe injury). Seeing blood sprouting from his body, the blood-drinking and thirsty Joginis gathered around him with overturned skulls as bowls to collect the blood (1).

Tulsidas says that his Lord Sri Ram, smeared with drops of blood (of the enemy) looked marvelous in the battle-field. He resembled the huge mountain known as Markat on which beautiful deep red creeping insects have spread (2). [6/51]

Ram Charit Manas :

सुर ब्रह्मादि सिद्ध मुनि नाना । देखत रन नभ चढ़े बिमाना ॥1
 सुभट समर रस दुहु दिसि माते । कपि जयसील राम बल ताते ॥3
 एक एक सन भिरहिं पचारहिं । एकन्ह एक मर्दि महि पारहिं ॥4
 मारहिं काटहिं धरहिं पछारहिं । सीस तोरि सीसन्ह सन मारहिं ॥5
 उदर बिदारहिं भुजा उपारहिं । गहि पद अवनि पटकि भट डारहिं ॥6
 निसिचर भट महि गाड़हिं भालू । ऊपर ढारि देहिं बहु बालू ॥7
 बीर बलीमुख जुद्ध बिरुद्धे । देखिअत बिपुल काल जनु क्रुद्धे ॥8
 छन्द- क्रुद्धे कृतांत समान कपि तन स्रवत सोनित राजहीं ।
 मर्दहिं निसाचर कटक भट बलवंत घन जिमि गाजहीं ॥1
 मारहिं चपेटन्हि डाटि दातन्ह काटि लातन्ह मीजहीं ।
 चिक्करहिं मर्कट भालु छल बल करहिं जेहिं खल छीजहीं ॥2
 धरि गाल फारहिं उर बिदारहिं गल अँतावरि मेलहीं ।
 प्रह्लादपति जनु बिबिध तनु धरि समर अंगन खेलहीं ॥3
 धरु मारु काटु पछारु घोर गिरा गगन महि भरि रही ।
 जय राम जो तृन ते कुलिस कर कुलिस ते कर तृन सही ॥4 [6/81/1,3-8 Cha 1-4]

Brahma and other Gods, sages and mystics boarded their aerial vehicles/chariots and watched the progress of the battle from the heavens (1).

The champions on both sides were maddened by a passion to fight, but the monkeys led the field emboldened by the might of Lord Ram (3). With war cries and shouts of defiance, they clashed in single combat—warrior to warrior—each crushing his opponent and dashing him to the ground (4). They hit, hacked to pieces, clutched them and threw them to the ground; they tore their adversary's head from the trunk (body) and used the severed heads as missiles to pelt each other like stones (5). The belly was ripped / torn apart, arms were twisted and plucked from the body and seizing the opponent by the foot, he was dashed to the ground (6). The demon warriors were seized by the bears and buried alive in the ground, and covered with sand (7). The brave monkeys resembled the God of death himself and fought furiously with their enemies (8). [6/81/1,3-8].

With their body covered with blood, the monkeys looked like God of Death; crushing the demon warriors, they roared like thunder clouds (1). They slapped, scolded, bit ferociously and trampled their enemies; the monkeys and bears let out Shriill cry of war which sent chilling shivers in the opposite camps, and tried all possible strategy to exterminate the opponents (2). They tore open the cheeks and bellies of the demons and, extracting the entrails (intestines etc.) hung them around their necks as if Lord Narshing (half lion-half man incarnation of God to protect his devotee Prahalad from the torture of his father) had assumed numerous forms and performing the death-dance in the battle-field (3). The savage and chilling war cries ('cut, bite, seize, knock-down, kill') of both the sides filled both the heaven and earth. Tulsidas praises the glory of Lord Ram who is capable of converting a harmless blade of grass into a thunderbolt (4) [6/81/Cha 1-4].

एहीं बीच निसाचर अनी । कसमसात आई अति घनी ॥1
देखि चले सन्मुख कपि भट्टा । प्रलयकाल के जनु घन घट्टा ॥2
बहु कृपान तरवारि चमंकहि । जनु दहँ दिसि दामिनी दमंकहि ॥3
गज रथ तुरग चिकार कठोरा । गर्जहिं मनहुँ बलाहक घोरा ॥4
कपि लंगूर बिपुल नभ छाए । मनहुँ इंद्रधनु उए सुहाए ॥5
उठइ धूरि मानहुँ जलधारा । बान बुंद भै बृष्टि अपारा ॥6
दुहुँ दिसि पर्वत करहिं प्रहारा । बज्रपात जनु बारहिं बारा ॥7
रघुपति कोपि बान झरि लाई । घायल भै निसिचर समुदाई ॥8
लागत बान बीर चिक्करहीं । घुमि घुमि जहँ तहँ महि परहीं ॥9
स्रवहिं सैल जनु निर्झर भारी । सोनित सरि कादर भयकारी ॥10 [6/87/1-10]
छन्द- कादर भयंकर रुधिर सरिता चली परम अपावनी ।
दोउ कूल दल रथ रेत चक्र अबर्त बहति भयावनी ॥1
जलजंतु गज पदचर तुरग खर बिबिध बाहन को गने ।
सर सक्ति तोमर सर्प चाप तरंग चर्म कमठ घने ॥2 [Chanda 6/871-2]
दोहा- बीर परहिं जनु तीर तरु मज्जा बहु बह फेन ।
कादर देखि डरहिं तहँ सुभटन्ह के मन चेन ॥ [Doha 6/87.]

Meanwhile, seeing his army dying and the rank and file demoralised by the battering they received at the hands of the monkeys and bears, reinforcement battalions of the demons

arrived—they were so numerous that they seemed almost packed tight elbow to elbow (1).

The moment the monkeys saw the arrival of new warriors, they advanced to meet them like huge banks of clouds that gather in the sky at the time of dooms day (universal destruction) (2) numerous swords and claymores (a long bladed, two-edged sword) flashed and gleamed in the sunlight, like lighting shinning in every direction (3). The shrill cries of the war elephants and horses, and the rattling of chariots resembled the terrible thundering of doomsday clouds (4). The monkeys's tails stretched and swayed in the sky like arrays of magnificent rainbows appearing against the dark clouds in the sky (5). The kicked-up dust rose in thick columns like torrent of rain in the air and arrows shot forth like endless shower of glistening rain-drops (6). The mountain thrown on each other crashed to the ground like repeated lightening strikes, making a reverberating thud (7). Lord Ram's arrow rained on the enemy group and wounded them (8); the demon warriors shrieked and cried as arrows pierced them, and they swooned, tottered and swung in circles here, there and everywhere before falling to the ground (9). With blood oozing from their bodies, the demons appeared like huge mountains from which rivers, streams, rivulets cascade down here and trickle down there, and the river of blood (thus flowing) instilled fear among the cowards (10) [6/87/1-10].

A most hideous and unholy river of blood flowed through the battle field; the two armies were its banks, the chariots were the intervening sand-dunes, and their wheels were the whirlpools, as it were; it was indeed a frightful scene (1).

The dead infantry, war elephants, horses, donkeys and other mounts of the dead or fallen soldiers that floated on this river of blood looked like various aquatic animals; the arrows, lances, iron-clubs, spears, spikes swept along like so many water-serpents; the fallen bows which swept across the current of blood looked like waves, while the floating shields, with the convex side up, represented so many tortoises (2) [6/87/Chhand 1-2]

Warriors lay dead on its banks like fallen trees, and the bone marrow squeezed out of crushed bones represented the scum of the water; cowards shuddered while the brave delighted at this sight [Doha 6/87].

मज्जहिं भूत पिसाच बेताला । प्रमथ महा झोटिंग कराला ॥1
काक कंक लै भुजा उड़ाहीं । एक ते छीनि एक लै खाहीं ॥2
एक कहहिं ऐसिउ सौंघाई । सठहु तुम्हार दरिद्र न जाइ ॥3
कहँरत भट घायल तट गिरे । जहँ जहँ मनहुँ अर्धजल परे ॥4
खँचहिं गीध आँत तट भए । जनु बंसी खेलत चित दए ॥5
बहु भट बहहिं चढ़े खग जाहीं । जनु नावरि खेलहिं सरि माहीं ॥6
जोगिनी भरि भरि खप्पर संचहिं । भूत पिसाच बधू नभ नंचहिं ॥7
भट कपाल करताल बजावहिं । चामुंडा नाना बिधि गावहिं ॥8
जंबुक निकर कटक्कट कट्टहिं । खाहिं हुआहिं अघाहिं दपट्टहिं ॥9
कोटिन्ह रंड मुंड बिनु डोल्लहिं । सीस परे महि जय जय बोल्लहिं ॥10 [6/88,1-10]
छन्द- बोल्लहिं जो जय जय मुंड रंड प्रचंड सिर बिनु धावहीं ।
खप्परिन्ह खग्ग अलुज्झि जुज्झहिं सुभट भटन्ह ढहावहीं ॥11

बानर निसाचर निकर मर्दहिं राम बल दर्पित भए ।
संग्राम अंगन सुभट सोवहिं राम सर निकरन्हि हए ।।2 [Chanda 6/88/1-2]

Spirits, ghosts, hobgoblins, frightful genii (those ghosts who have large shabby mass of hair) and phantoms of all shapes and sizes took a plunge in this river (of blood). (1) Crows and kites seized, tore and flew away with arms / legs and snatched them from each other or ate themselves (2); while others admonished them, saying 'why do you fight like beggars amidst such plenty!' (3).

Wounded and mutilated warriors fell on the banks, groaned and wailed in agony, half submerged-half out of the water (blood) (4). The vultures stood on the banks with rapt attention, ready to strike and tear apart the entrails (intestines etc.) of dead and floating bodies like a fisherman watching the bait line with hopeful attention (5). Many dead warriors floated down with birds perched on them as if the latter were enjoying the sport of boating on the river (6). Yoginies (female blood drinking attendants of Durga, the Goddess of War) collected blood in hollowed out and upturned skulls using them as bowls, while female spirits danced in the air (7). Chamundas (female war attendants of Goddess Durga) sang joyous songs and beat skulls of dead warriors like so many pairs of cymbals (8). Herds of Jackals ground their teeth, tore at the dead bodies, feasted upon them, snarled and yelled (9). Numerous head-less trunks trotted along the battle field, while the dismembered heads lying on the ground, shouted "Victory-Victory!" (10) [6/88/1-10].

With heads shouting victory, the trunks darting hither-thither, birds of prey entangled among themselves, vying for the skulls and flesh, the battle continued—with champion warriors overthrowing their opponents.

Emboldened by Lord Ram's glory and might, the monkeys crushed the demon army progressively, while, struck by Lord Ram's arrows, the enemy lay in eternal sleep [Chanda 6/88/1-2].

[Note : Tulsidas has painted such a vivid, lucid and lively pen-picture of the terrible, horrifying, hideous, disghustable and frightfully gory scene of the battle field that one is awestruck with the horrors of war. Perhaps the poet wants to subtly warn us of the consequences of yielding to the base qualities of lust and greed, for had it not been for the lust of Ravana for another person's wife and Sita's greed to have the golden-skinned deer that forced Lord Ram to leave her alone in the forest, such a havoc, death and destruction on all sides would not have happened at all. Also, had Ravana listened to the sane council of his wife, ministers, brother, Ram's messengers etc. the war could have been avoided, but so blind did he become in his pride of invincibility that he failed to use his wisdom and discrimination to judge what is wrong or what is right. The poet also drives home the point that wars are best avoided-because they only destroy and cause agony and havoc all around.]

देवन्ह प्रभुहि पयादे देखा । उपजा उर अति छोभ बिसेषा ।।1
सुरपति निज रथ तुरत पठावा । हरष सहित मातलि लै आवा ।।2

तेज पुंज रथ दिव्य अनूपा । हरषि चढे कोसलपुर भूपा ॥3
 चंचल तुरग मनोहर चारी । अजर अमर मन सम गतिकारी ॥4
 रथारूढ रघुनाथहि देखी । धाए कपि बलु पाइ बिसेषी ॥5 [6/89/1-5]

When the Gods saw that the Lord was on foot, they were exceedingly ashamed and distressed at heart (1). So, Indra, the king of Gods, dispatched his own chariot forthwith which was brought at the service of Lord Ram by Matali, the charioteer (2).

It was a glowing, splendorous, heavenly chariot on which Lord Ram rode to the battle front to face the enemy (3). It was driven by 4 charming, high spirited horses which flew as fast as thought (i.e. reached their destination immediately when ordered to do so) and were immune to death and decay (4). Seeing their Lord mounted on a heavenly chariot, the monkeys charged forward with renewed vigour.

{Now we shall read how Kumbhakaran, the brother of Ravana, was killed.}

Death of Kumbhakaran: Ram Charit Manas :

दोहा- सुनि दसकंधर बचन तब कुंभकरन बिलखान ।
 जगदंबा हरि आनि अब सठ चाहत कल्यान ॥ [Doha 6/62.]
 भल न कीन्ह तैं निसिचर नाहा । अब मोहि आइ जगाएहि काहा ॥1
 अजहूँ तात त्यागि अभिमाना । भजहु राम होइहि कल्याना ॥2
 अहह बंधु तैं कीन्हि खोटाई । प्रथमहिं मोहि न सुनाएहि आई ॥4 [6/63/1-2,4]

When Ravana approached his brother Kumbhakaran to join battle, the latter lamented and said, 'Oh you fool! How can you expect good and welfare by abducting Sita, who is the mother of all (Universe)? [Doha 6/22].

Oh brother! You have not acted wisely, what is the use of waking me up now from sleep; had you done it earlier, I would have prevented things from deteriorating and slipping out of control (1) Nevertheless, its still not too late; if you want your good, have devotion for Lord Ram (2). Why didn't you tell me earlier of your mischief and misdeeds (4) ?' [6/63/1-4]

महिष खाइ करि मदिरा पाना । गर्जा बज्राघात समाना ॥1
 कुंभकरन दुर्मद रन रंगा । चला दुर्ग तजि सेन न संगी ॥2 [6/64/1-2]

Then, finding that Ravana would not listen to him, because death had corrupted his discrimination faculty, thinking and wisdom, he prepared for battle. He feasted on buffaloes and wine, and roared like thunder and crash of lightening (1). Having got drunk and losing all inhibitions and full of passion for war, he left the fort alone (without the support of troops), so over-confident he was of his might, valour and courage (2). [6/64/1-2]

कोटि कोटि कपि धरि धरि खाई । जनु टीड़ी गिरि गुहाँ समाई ॥2
 कोटिन्ह गहि सरीर सन मर्दा । कोटिन्ह मीजि मिलव महि गर्दा ॥3
 मुख नासा श्रवनन्हि कीं बाटा । निसरि पराहिं भालु कपि ठाटा ॥4
 रन मद मत्त निसाचर दर्पा । बिस्व ग्रसिहि जनु एहि बिधि अर्पा ॥5
 मुरे सुभट सब फिरहिं न फेरे । सूझ न नयन सुनहिं नहिं टेरे ॥6
 कुंभकरन कपि फौज बिडारी । सुनि धाई रजनीचर धारी ॥7
 देखी राम बिकल कटकाई । रिपु अनीक नाना बिधि आई ॥8 [6/67/2-8]
 दोहा- सुनु सुग्रीव बिभीषन अनुज सँभारेहु सैन ।
 मैं देखउँ खल बल दलहि बोले राजिवनैन ॥ [Doha 6/67]

Maddened with the passions of war and furious with rage he (Kumbhkaran) seized numerous monkeys and pushed them down his mouth as if swarms of locusts were entering a mountain cave (so large was his mouth and so tiny the monkeys appeared in its comparison (2); seizing still others, he crashed them against his body or wringed and squeezed them between his palms and dropped them in the dust (3). The ones who had entered his stomach, swarmed out from the cavernous nose, mouth and ears of his body and escaped (4) Intoxicated with the frenzy of battle, he appeared to challenge the entire universe, ready to devour it (5). The monkey warriors, for once, ran away hither-thither and no amount of exhortations from their commanders made them return for battle, so scared they were of this demon. They could not see or hear anything (6). The demon army charged forward having learnt that Kumbhkaran had dispersed the monkeys' army (7).

Lord Ram saw this reversal on the field with retreat and scattering of his forces and regrouping and advance of the enemy (8) [6/61/1-8].

He summoned his commanders and said, 'Listen Sugriv, Vibhishan and Laxman. Take care of the army, while I test the strength of this wretch (I shall engage him in a duel).' [Doha 6/67.]

दोहा- छन महुँ प्रभु के सायकन्हि काटे बिकट पिसाच ।
 पुनि रघुबीर निषंग महुँ प्रबिसे सब नाराच ॥ [Doha 6/68.]
 कुंभकरन मन दीख बिचारी । हति छन माझ निसाचर धारी ॥1
 भा अति क्रुद्ध महाबल बीरा । कियो मृगनायक नाद गँभीरा ॥2
 कोपि महीधर लेइ उपारी । डारइ जहँ मर्कट भट भारी ॥3
 आवत देखि सैल प्रभु भारे । सरन्हि काटि रज सम करि डारे ॥4 [6/69/1-4]

In a fleeting moment, Lord Ram's arrows cut down the demon army; the arrows returned to Ram's quiver [Doha 6/68].

[Note : In Modern day parlance, we can call it re-usable multibarrel missile or rocket launcher.]

When Kumbhkaran realised that his army had been wiped out in an instant (1), he roared furiously like a lion and flew into a violent rage (2). He tore up mountains and pelted them at Lord Ram and his army (3), but before these could do any harm, Lord

Ram shattered them into small harmless pieces with his arrows. [This is an example of the modern-day technology of intercepting missiles.] (4). [6/69/1-4]

राम सेन निज पाछें घाली । चले सकोप महा बलसाली ॥6
 खैंचि धनुष सर सत संधाने । छूटे तीर सरीर समाने ॥7
 लागत सर धावा रिस भरा । कुधर डगमगत डोलति धरा ॥8
 लीन्ह एक तेहिं सैल उपाटी । रघुकुल तिलक भुजा सोइ काटी ॥9
 धावा बाम बाहु गिरि धारी । प्रभु सोउ भुजा काटि महि पारी ॥10
 काटें भुजा सोह खल कैसा । पच्छहीन मंदर गिरि जैसा ॥11
 उग्र बिलोकनि प्रभुहि बिलोका । ग्रसन चहत मानहुँ त्रैलोका ॥12 [6/70/6-12]
 बिसिख निकर निसिचर मुख भरेऊ । तदपि महाबल भूमि न परेऊ ॥2
 सरन्हि भरा मुख सन्मुख धावा । काल त्रोन सजीव जनु आवा ॥3
 तब प्रभु कोपि तीव्र सर लीन्हा । धर ते भिन्न तासु सिर कीन्हा ॥4
 सो सिर परेउ दसानन आगें । बिकल भयउ जिमि फनि मनि त्यागें ॥5
 धरनि धसइ धर धाव प्रचंडा । तब प्रभु काटि कीन्ह दुइ खंडा ॥6
 परे भूमि जिमि नभ तें भूधर । हेठ दाबि कपि भालु निसाचर ॥7
 तासु तेज प्रभु बदन समाना । सुर मुनि सबहिं अचंभव माना ॥8 [6/71/2-8]

In the final assault the most powerful Lord Ram advanced forward, keeping his army in the rear (6). He fired a volley of 100 arrows at a time, but they all disappeared in the demon's body (7). Struck with arrows, the demon lurched forward burning with rage; mountains and earth shook as he ran (8). He took a rock to hurl, but Lord Ram cut off that arm (9); he then rushed forward with a rock in his left hand which was also cut off (10); Devoid of his arms, he looked like a huge bird (or Mt. Mandara) without its wings (11). He looked furiously at Lord Ram, as if he will devour the entire creation (12). [6/70/6-12]

Lord Ram filled the demon's mouth with his arrows, but still he did not fall to the ground (2). Instead, he rushed forward with arrows protruding from his mouth like a living quiver of Death it self, as it were (3).

At last, Lord Ram shot an arrow which cut off his head from the trunk, which flew and fell in front of Ravana, who seeing it, felt crest fallen like a snake who has lost its Mani [a luminiscent sac on the hood of a snake which glows in darkness] (4-5).

As the trunk sank tottering, swirling and still jumping on the ground, the earth creaked and subsided under its weight, so Lord Ram cut it into two pieces with an arrow (6) which fell to the ground like huge mountains dropping on the earth from the heavens, crushing beneath them monkeys bears and demons alike (7).

His soul came out in the form of an effusion of a brilliant ball or shaft of heavenly light and entered the person of Lord Sri Ram, a spectacle that astonished even the assembled Gods, sages and others (8). [6/71/2-8].

{When Kumbhakaran died, Meghnad entered the arena and fought a fierce battle with Laxman. During the course of the battle he shot an invincible arrow which caused

Laxman to faint. Lord Ram lamented and asked Hanuman to fetch the herb from the northern mountains by administering which Laxman was finally revived.}

Fainting of Laxman, Hanuman brings the herb, and Laxman's revival—

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/52—

मानी मेघनादसों प्रचारि भिरे भारी भट,
आपने अपन पुरुषारथ न ढील की।
घायल लखनलालु लखि बिलखाने रामु,
भई आस सिथिल जगन्निवास-दीलकी॥
भाईको न मोहु छोहु सीयको न तुलसीस
कहैं 'मैं बिभीषनकी कछु न सबील की'।
लाज बाँह बोलेकी, नेवाजेकी सँभार-सार
साहेबु न रामु-से बलाइ लेउँ सीलकी॥52॥

Verse no. 6/52—Many brave warriors, who were proud of their bravery, clashed with Meghnad, and they did not refrain from showing their valour, strength and prowess. Seeing Laxman injured, Lord Ram started weeping and wailing in distress, and the heart of him (Ram), who is the abode of the world, lost all hopes. The Lord of Tulsidas does not worry about the loss of his own brother, or Sita, but is terribly upset that he could not make any suitable arrangement for Vibhishan. He is more worried about Vibhishan because he is very sensitive to his responsibilities towards the latter (since he has taken the Lord's refuge). There is no master or Lord compared to Lord Ram—I (Tulsidas) say it earnestly and bow before this unique character, natural disposition and quality of Sri Ram (to look after the welfare of his dependants). [6/52]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/53—

कानन बासु दसाननु सो रिपु
आननश्री ससि जीति लियो है।
बालि महा बलसालि दल्यो
कपि पालि बिभीषनु भूपु कियो है॥
तीय हरी, रन बंधु पर्यो
पै भर्त्यो सरनागत सोच हियो है।
बाँह-पगार उदार कृपाल
कहाँ रघुबीरु सो बीरु बियो है॥53॥

Verse no. 6/53—In spite of hardships of living in a forest and having an enemy as formidable as Ravana, the beauty of the countenance of Sri Ram's face has surpassed (won over) that of the Moon. He slayed most powerful Bali and protected Sugriv (from Bali's torment), and made Vibhishan the king of Lanka. On the other hand, his wife was stolen (kidnapped) and brother has fallen in the battle-field—still Sri Ram is worried about him who has sought refuge at his feet (about Vibhishan). Indeed, where would one

find such a benevolent, magnanimous and merciful Lord as Sri Ram to give protection to those who have sought the protection of his arms? [6/53]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/54—

लीन्हो उखारि पहारु बिसाल,
चल्यो तेहि काल, बिलंबु न लायो।
मारुतनंदन मारुतको, मनको,
खगराजको बेगु लजायो।।
तीखी तुरा 'तुलसी' कहतो,
पै हिउँ उपमाको समाउ न आयो।
मानो प्रतच्छ परबतकी नभ
लीक लसी, कपि यों धुकि धायो।।54।।

Verse no. 6/54—[When the physician named Sushen prescribed the herb called Sanjivani found in the Himalayan Mountains, Hanuman went north to fetch it from Dronachal Mountain, but unable to recognise the herb he uprooted the entire mountain].

Without wasting any time, he (Hanuman) immediately uprooted the huge mountain and started back towards Lanka. He left to shame even wind, Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu) and mind in speed and swiftness.

Tulsidas says that he tried in vain to find anything to compare with his speed and swiftness of movement as he darted across the sky, so he has abandoned the attempt (to describe it). Hanuman leapt so fast and darted like a streak of lightening across the sky that he left a trail behind him in it (i.e. he moved so fast that the mountain appeared to stretch from point-to-point across the sky). [6/54]

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/55—

चल्यो हनुमान, सुनि जातुधान कालनेमि
पठ्यो, सो मुनि भयो, पायो फलु छलि कै।
सहसा उखारो है पहारु बहु जोजनको,
रखवारे मारे भारे भूरि भट दलि कै।।
बेगु, बलु, साहस, सराहत कृपाल रामु,
भरतकी कुसल, अचलु ल्यायो चलि कै।
हाथ हरिनाथके बिकाने रघुनाथ जनु,
सीलसिंधु तुलसीस भलो मान्यो भलि कै।।55।।

Verse no. 6/55—Hearing that Hanuman had gone to fetch the life-restoring herb, Ravana sent a demon called Kalnemi to intervene and stop him. He assumed the form of a hermit and (in an attempt to cheat and trap Hanuman) got killed himself. Hanuman easily lifted a very large mountain, many miles long, killed and destroyed numerous demons and the greatest of warriors.

'Look, Hanuman has brought back the mountain and the news of welfare of Bharat.' Saying this, the merciful Lord Ram was lavish in his praise of Hanuman's

valour, fame, courage and swiftness as if the Lord was highly indebted and obliged to him.

The Lord of Tulsidas, i.e. Lord Ram, blessed and obliged Hanuman in all possible ways. [6/55]”

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 6/5—

राम—लषन उर लाय लये हैं।
 भरे नीर राजीव—नयन सब अँग परिताप तए हैं॥ 1॥
 कहत ससोक बिलोकि बंधु—मुख बचन प्रीति गुथए हैं।
 सेवक—सखा भगति—भायप—गुन चाहत अब अथए हैं॥ 2॥
 निज कीरति—करतूति तात ! तुम सुकृती सकल जए हैं।
 मैं तुम्ह बिनु तनु राखि लोक अपने अपलोक लए हैं॥ 3॥
 मेरे पनकी लाज इहाँलौं हठि प्रिय प्रान दए हैं।
 लागति साँगि बिभीषन ही पर, सीपर आपु भए हैं॥ 4॥
 सुनि प्रभु—बचन भालु—कपि—गन, सुर सोच सुखाइ गए हैं।
 तुलसी आइ पवनसुत—बिधि मानो फिरि निरमये नए हैं॥ 5॥

Verse no. 6/5—[When Laxman fainted at being shot by an arrow of Meghnad, Hanuman brought the wounded Laxman to where Lord Ram was.] Lord Ram lifted Laxman and clasped him to his bosom. His lotus-like eyes were filled with tears and his entire body was extremely weary with lamentation, contrition, sorrow and anguish (1).

Seeing the face of his brother, he was overwhelmed with sorrows and anguish and said these woeful words soaked in deep regret and full of affection, ‘It appears that all the qualities (characteristics) of a servant, friend, devotee/worshipper and brotherhood/fraternity are about to set (i.e., eclipsed, vanished, removed for good) (2).

Oh Dear! You have won over all the noble characters and virtues by your renowned glory and good, virtuous deeds. By keeping this body (i.e., by being alive) without you (by my side), I have only earned a bad name and a lot of infamy (3).

Ah, alas! You are indeed so vigilant and resolute about upholding my vows that you had laid down your life for it. That is why, though the ‘Shakti’ [an arrow with specially tipped potent head which cannot go in vain] was aimed at Vibhishan, you had borne it like a shield.’ [Meghnad had aimed his arrow to shoot down Vibhishan but Laxman interceded and accepted the arrow himself] (4).

Hearing these mournful words of lamentation being spoken by Sri Ram, the bears, monkeys and Gods became withered (i.e. dejected, depressed, anguished, forlorn, gloomy and sad). Tulsidas says that just at this moment, the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman) appeared (with the life saving Sanjivani herb) as if he was the creator (Brahma) himself, and infused new life in him (Sri Ram). [Brahma is the creator; so by alluding to him Tulsidas says that a new lease of life was granted to Laxman by Hanuman by bringing the herb. So, Hanuman has been likened to the creator Brahma here.] (5). [6/5]

Geetawali: Raag Sorath: Verse no. 6/6—

मोपै तो न कछू है आई।
 ओर निबाहि भली बिधि भायप चल्यो लखन—सो भाई॥ 1॥
 पुर, पितु—मातु, सकल सुख परिहरि जेहि बन—बिपति बँटाई।
 ता सँग हौं सुरलोक सोक तजि सक्यो न प्रान पठाई॥ 2॥
 जानत हौं या उर कठोरतें कुलिस कठिनता पाई।
 सुमिरि सनेह सुमित्रा—सुतको दरकि दरार न जाई॥ 3॥
 तात—मरन, तिय—हरन, गीध—बध, भुज दाहिनी गँवाई।
 तुलसी मैं सब भाँति आपने कुलहि कालिमा लाई॥ 4॥

Verse no. 6/6—[Lord Ram's lamentation—] ‘Alas! I couldn't do anything! Today, Laxman who was matchless as a brother, upheld the rules and sanctity of brotherhood, and most unfortunately, he has gone now (died) (1).

He, who had resolutely forsaken the city, father, mother and all types of comfort and happiness to share the troubles and tribulations of my forest exile—I could not abandon my sorrows and send my soul with him to the abode of Gods (i.e. died with him) (2).

It appears that Vajra (the strong and hard weapon of Indra) has obtained its hardness (toughness, sternness) from my hardened (stiff, emotionless) heart; this is why perhaps it did not crack by recalling (remembering) the affection and love of Laxman that he had for me (3).

Alas! I was the cause for my father's (Dasrath's) death, the wife (Sita) was abducted, the vulture king (Jatau) lost his life and now I had to lose this right arm (Laxman). Thus, I have tarnished my clan in all of my actions (in all possible ways) (4).’ [6/6]

Geetawali: Verse no. 6/7—

मेरो सब पुरुषारथ थाको।
 बिपति बँटावन बंधु—बाहु बिनु करौं भरोसो काको॥ 1॥
 सुनु, सुग्रीव ! साँचेहू मोपर फेर्यो बदन बिधाता।
 ऐसे समय समर—संकट हौं तज्यो लषन—सो भ्राता॥ 2॥
 गिरि, कानन जैहैं साखा—मृग, हौं पुनि अनुज—सँघाती।
 हैहै कहा बिभीषनकी गति रही सोच भरि छाती॥ 3॥
 तुलसी सुनि प्रभु—बचन भालु—कपि सकल बिकल हिय हारे।
 जामवंत हनुमंत बोलि तब, औसर जानि प्रचारे॥ 4॥

Verse no. 6/7—[Lord Ram continues with his grieving—] ‘All my vigour has become tired now (i.e. I have lost courage, resolution and the spirit to do anything now). Without my brother who had shared my woes and troubles, and who was the strength of my arms, whom (or who else) should I rely upon now? (1).

Listen, Sugriv! The creator has indeed turned his face away from me (i.e., has become opposed and malicious towards me), this is why when the fear of war is imminent, Laxman-like brother has also forsaken me (2).

The monkeys would go back to the mountains and forests, while I would follow my brother Laxman (die), but my only worry is what, then, will be the fate of Vibhishan? (3).'

Tulidas says that hearing such mournful lamentations full of contrition of the Lord, all the monkeys and bears became extremely anguished, agitated and weary. At this mournful, woeful moment, (the bear king) Jamvant summoned Hanuman and encouraged him (to come to rescue and save the day, as it were) (4). [6/7]

Geetawali: Raag Maaru: Verse no. 6/8—

जौ हौं अब अनुसासन पावौं ।
 तौ चंद्रमहि निचोरि चैल—ज्यों, आनि सुधा सिर नावौं ॥ १ ॥
 कै पाताल दलौं ब्यालावलि अमृत—कुंड महि लावौं ।
 भेदि भुवन, करि भानु बाहिरो तुरत राहु दै तावौं ॥ २ ॥
 बिबुध—बैद बरबस आनौं धरि, तौ प्रभु—अनुग कहावौं ।
 पटकों मीच नीच मूषक—ज्यों, सबहिको पापु बहावौं ॥ ३ ॥
 तुम्हरिहि कृपा, प्रताप तिहारेहि नेकु बिलंब न लावौं ।
 दीजै सोइ आयसु तुलसी—प्रभु, जेहि तुम्हरे मन भावौं ॥ ४ ॥

Verse no. 6/8—[Hanuman consoled Lord Ram and encouraged him to have strength. He assured the Lord by saying—] ‘If I get your permission, I will wring the moon as if it were a piece of cloth and squeeze the Amrit (nectar of life) out of it, bring it to you (in order to revive Laxman)—and then only I will bow my head before you! (1).

Or, should I kill the legendary serpents in the nether world who are protecting the pitcher of Amrit and bring it to the surface. If that did not serve the purpose, should I crack the universe, throw the Sun out of it and bring Rahu, the enemy of the Sun, and seat him in the vacant place (caused by throwing the Sun out) and close the cavity (so that the Sun cannot rise over the world again, and Laxman can remain in suspended animation) (2).

Not only this, I shall prove my loyalty to my Lord (Sri Ram) only when I will bring Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the Gods, forcefully. Or, shall I trounce ‘death’ like a humble rat and make the creatures fearless from it (i.e., then, when ‘death’ is smashed to a pulp, no one will have the fear of dying and, therefore, Laxman will never die) (3).

Lord! It is because (or on the strength) of your grace and your might that I shall not delay in all of these works. Hence, oh Lord of Tulidas, order me to do whatever you think fit, which would please you and will make me endeared to you (4).’ [6/8]

Geetawali: Verse no. 6/9—

सुनि हनुमंत—बचन रघुबीर।
 सत्य, समीर—सुवन ! सब लायक, कह्यो राम धरि धीर॥ 1॥
 चाहिये बैद, ईस—आयसु धरि सीस कीस बलऐन।
 आन्यो सदनसहित सोवत ही, जौलौं पलक परै न॥ 2॥
 जियै कुँवर, निसि मिलै मूलिका, कीन्हीं बिनय सुषेन।
 उठ्यो कपीस, सुमिरि सीतापति चल्यो सजीवनि लेन॥ 3॥
 कालनेमि दलि बेगि बिलोक्यौ द्रोनाचल जिय जानि।
 देखी दिव्य ओषधी जहँ तहँ जरी, न परि पहिचानि॥ 4॥
 लियो उठाय कुधर कंदुक—ज्यौं, बेग न जाइ बखानि।
 ज्यौं धाए गजराज—उधारन सपदि सुदरसनपानि॥ 5॥
 आनि पहार जोहारे प्रभु, कियो बैदराज उपचार।
 करुनासिंधु बंधु भेंट्यो, मिटि गयो सकल दुख—भार॥ 6॥
 मुदित भालु कपि—कटक, लह्यो जनु समर पयोनिधि पार।
 बहुरि ठौरही राखि महीधर आयो पवनकुमार॥ 7॥
 सेन सहित सेवकहि सराहत पुनि पुनि राम सुजान।
 बरषि सुमन, हिय हरषि प्रसंसत बिबुध बजाइ निसान॥ 8॥
 तुलसिदास सुधि पाइ निसाचर भए मनहु बिनु प्रान।
 परी भोरही रोर लंकगढ़, दई हाँक हनुमान॥ 9॥

Verse no. 6/9—Hearing the words of Hanuman, Raghubir (Lord Ram) felt reassured and patiently said, 'It is true, Oh son of the Wind-God! You can indeed do all these things (1). Now, there is the immediate need of a physician (a doctor, a Vaidya).'

Keeping the Lord's orders on his head (i.e. he carried out the orders immediately on priority basis), the strong monkey (Hanuman) brought a Vaidya who was asleep by scooping up the entire house in the fraction of a moment so small that one could not bat an eye-lid (2).

The Vaidya named Sushen said politely, 'If the Sanjivani herb can be brought during the night itself (before sunrise), then the prince can be revived.'

As soon as he heard this, the Lord of monkeys (Hanuman) got up, remembered (invoked) Sri Ram (in his heart and mind) and started off to bring the herb. [Hanuman did not felt it necessary to take Sri Ram's permission before the journey, so confident he was of it.] (3).

On the way he slayed Kalnemi and soon saw Mt. Dronachal and recognised it by his sharp intellect. There he saw numerous herbs scattered here and there, but he could not specify (specifically recognise) the herb needed to revive Laxman (4).

Then he lifted the entire mountain like it were a ball (playfully, without any effort). No one can describe his speed and swiftness of that time. It appeared that the discus-bearing Lord Vishnu is rushing (dashing) forward to save the elephant king Gajraj (from the jaws of death) (5).

In this swift way, he brought the mountain and bowed before the Lord. And the Vaidya (Sushen) administered the proper herb (drug) to Laxman (so that he was instantly

revived). Thereafter, the ocean of mercy and compassion, Lord Ram, embraced his brother, and the entire burden caused by this unpleasant episode was removed (6).

The community (army) of bears and monkeys were also so jubilant as if they have crossed the ocean of war (i.e., have acquired victory in the war. Thence, Hanuman placed the mountain at a proper place (7).

At that time, the most wise Sri Ram, accompanied by the whole army, repeatedly praised his servant (follower, devotee Hanuman) while the Gods also showered flowers, became joyous in their hearts, played their trumpets/kettle-drums and praised him (8).

Tulsidas says that when the demons heard this news (of Laxman's revival), they appeared to become lifeless (discouraged, despaired, hopeless and panicky). At the crack of dawn, when Hanuman roared, there was a tumult and panic in Lanka (9). [6/9]

Geetawali: Raag Kedara: Verse no. 6/10—

कौतुक ही कपि कुधर लियो है।
 चल्यो नभ नाइ माथ रघुनाथहि, सरिस न बेग बियो है॥ 1॥
 देख्यो जात जानि निसिचर, बिनु फर सर हयो हियो है।
 पर्यो कहि राम, पवन राख्यो गिरि, पुर तेहि तेज पियो है॥ 2॥
 जाइ भरत भरि अंक भेंटि निज, जीवन—दान दियो है।
 दुख लघु लषन मरम—घायल सुनि, सुख बड़ो कीस जियो है॥ 3॥
 आयसु इतहि, स्वामि—संकट उत्त, परत न कछू कियो है।
 तुलसिदास बिदर्यो अकास, सो कैसेकै जात सियो है॥ 4॥

Verse no. 6/10—[Tulsidas now describes the incident that occurred while Hanuman was returning to Lanka with the mountain and the herb—] Hanuman playfully scooped up (lifted) the mountain and, bowing his head to Raghunath (Sri Ram) he started on the way back through the sky; no one had the speed and swiftness that Hanuman had at that time (1).

Seeing him passing over (Ayodhya) and thinking that he was some demon, Bharat shot a headless arrow (i.e. only shaft) at his heart. Then he (Hanuman) cried aloud 'Ram' and fell down as if the city had sucked his strength. The Wind-God kept the huge mountain aloft (to protect Ayodhya from being crushed under its expanse and weight) (2).

Then Bharat having heard Hanuman exclaim 'Ram' went near him, lifted him in his arms and gave him the boon (blessing) of life (i.e. removed the arrow stuck in his body, did first aid and revived him back to consciousness). Hearing that Laxman was wounded caused consternation to him a little bit, but seeing that Hanuman was alive was a greater source of joy. [Because, getting wounded is not a great source of worry for a brave warrior, it is part of the game, as it were. Getting proper medicine in time was far more important. This is the reason that finding Hanuman alive and active was a greater source of joy—for, now, the medicine would reach Laxman, who was lying wounded in Lanka, on time.] (3).

The Lord has ordered him (Bharat) to stay at Ayodhya while there is a looming danger of war on his (Lord's) head—this caused a huge consternation and dilemma for Bharat, but he could not tell or do anything. Tulsidas compares Bharat's dilemma and perplexity to the question that if the sky is torn, how do we sew it? (There is no plausible solution to it) (4). [6/10]

Geetawali: Verse no. 6/11—

भरत-सत्रुसूदन बिलोकि कपि चकित भयो है।
 राम-लषन रन जीति अवध आए, कैधौ मोहि भ्रम,
 कैधौ काहू कपट ठयो है॥ 1॥
 प्रेम पुलकि, पहिचानिकै पदपदुम नयो है।
 कह्यो न परत जेहि भाँति दुहू भाइन
 सनेहसों सो उर लाय लयो है॥ 2॥
 समाचार कहि गहरु भो, तेंहि ताप तयो है।
 कुधर सहित चढ़ौ बिसिष, बेगि पठवौ, सुनि
 हरि हिय गरब गूढ़ उपयो है॥ 3॥
 तीरतें उतरि जस कह्यो चहै, गुनगननि जयो है।
 धनि भरत ! धनि भरत ! करत भयो,
 मगन मौन रह्यो मन अनुराग रयो है॥ 4॥
 यह जलनिधि खन्यो, मथ्यो, लँघ्यो, बाँध्यो, अँचयो है।
 तुलसिदास रघुबीर बंधु-महिमाको सिंधु
 तरि को कबि पार गयो है?॥ 5॥

Verse no. 6/11—Seeing Bharat and Shatrughan (who were look-alikes of Sri Ram and Laxman respectively) Hanuman was very confused and perplexed. He wondered—has Lord Ram and Laxman won victory in the war and returned to Ayodhya, or is this an illusion (am I hallucinating)? Or is this some sort of ploy, mischief or deception (created by the enemy)? (1).

Then, having recognised them (and realising the truth), he was thrilled with affections and bowed his head (reverentially) at their lotus-feet. The way those two brothers (endearingly, affectionately, enthusiastically, emotionally and eagerly) embraced him (Hanuman) cannot be described in words (2).

Then he (Hanuman) gave them (i.e. updated them with) the whole news (about Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita), and said urgently, 'I am getting late'.

Hearing all this, Bharat was overcome with grief and anguish, and said, 'You climb on (ride, mount) my arrow with the mountain; I shall send you immediately to where Lord Ram is.' Hearing these words, a sense of pride emerged in the heart of Hanuman covertly (3).

[Hanuman was proud because he vainly thought that he is so heavy, and added to this is the weight of the mountain—how can the arrow lift them both, he wondered. So, he mounted it, but when he saw that it was a fact—because Bharat raised his bow to shoot the arrow with Hanuman astride on it but looking like a mere fly on its shaft—his vanity disappeared and he got down from it.]

He began to sing the glories and good fame (virtues, valour, strength etc.) of Bharat for the latter's qualities and characters had won him over (or overwhelmed him). His mind was submerged in love, affection and endearment, and saying 'Bharat is great; Hail him', he was so benumbed with emotions (and astonishment) that he fell silent (4).

Tulsidas (compares the fame and glory of Bharat with an ocean and) says, 'This ocean was dug up (by the sons of king Sagar), was churned (by the Gods and demons), was leapt across and measured (by Hanuman), was bridged or tamed (by the monkey architects Nal and Neel) and was drunk (by sage Agastya). But no poet (bard) has ever been able to cross the ocean of Bharat's immense glories and grand auspicious virtues which are famous and known world-wide (i.e. they have not been able to describe them fully as they are immense and countless) (5). [6/11]"

{After recovery of Laxman, the Lord's army got a boost, and a fierce duel was fought between Meghnad and Laxman in which Meghnad died.}

Death of Meghnad: Ram Charit Manas

लै त्रिसूल धावा कपि भागे। आए जहाँ रामानुज आगे ॥4
 आवा परम क्रोध कर मारा। गर्ज घोर रव बारहिं बारा ॥5
 कोपि मरुतसुत अंगद धाए। हति त्रिसूल उर धरनि गिराए ॥6
 प्रभु कहँ छाँड़ैसि सूल प्रचंडा। सर हति कृत अनंत जुग खंडा ॥7
 उठि बहोरि मारुति जुबराजा। हतहिं कोपि तेहि घाउ न बाजा ॥8
 फिरे बीर रिपु मरइ न मारा। तब धावा करि घोर चिकारा ॥9
 आवत देखि क्रुद्ध जनु काला। लछिमन छाड़े बिसिख कराला ॥10
 देखेसि आवत पबि सम बाना। तुरत भयउ खल अंतरधाना ॥11
 बिबिध बेष धरि करइ लराई। कबहुँक प्रगट कबहुँ दुरि जाई ॥12
 देखि अजय रिपु डरपे कीसा। परम क्रुद्ध तब भयउ अहीसा ॥13
 लछिमन मन अस मंत्र दृढ़ावा। एहि पापिहि मैं बहुत खेलावा ॥14
 सुमिरि कोसलाधीस प्रतापा। सर संधान कीन्ह करि दापा ॥15
 छाड़ा बान माझ उर लागा। मरती बार कपटु सब त्यागा ॥16 [6/76/4-16]
 दोहा- रामानुज कहँ रामु कहँ अस कहि छाँड़ैसि प्रान।
 धन्य धन्य तव जननी कह अंगद हनुमान ॥ [Doha 6/76.]

Meghnad, in the final assault, rushed forward with trident in hand, and seeing the furious demon, the monkeys ran towards the spot where Laxman stood (4). With the wildest fury, the demon roared and yelled repeatedly (5). Hanuman and Angad charged at him, but with the vicious strike of the trident, he fell them (6). He then flung his vicious trident at Laxman, but the latter intercepted it with his arrows and split it into two (7). [This again is an example of interceptive missiles technology].

Meanwhile, Angad and Hanuman recovered and struck him furiously, but to no avail (8). When they lost hope of ever killing the demon and started retreating, the latter gave a shrill and chilling yell (9). When Laxman saw all this, he let out a volley of deadly

arrows (10) but the wretched demon vanished from sight, and assuming illusionary forms, he appeared and disappeared successively to deceive Laxman (11). The monkeys' army, who could not do the vanishing trick, were most distraught and bewildered at an enemy who was here now and vanished the next moment only to appear somewhere else (12). The beleaguered and frustrated monkeys looked at Laxman to do something. Laxman made a firm and final resolve to exterminate this menace and dispose of the demon once and for all (13-14).

So, invoking Lord Ram's glory in his mind, he aimed an arrow at the breast of the demon who abandoned all falsehood and deceit at the moment of death (15-16). [6/76/1-16]

Meghnad gave up his life calling the names of Sri Laxman and Lord Ram. And since his last words were, 'Where is Ram' before his spirit left the mortal body, both Angad and Hanuman praised him and the mother whose son he was (because, even Bali had made this observation of eternal-truth).

जन्म जन्म मुनि जतन कराहीं । अंत राम कहि आवत नाही ॥
जासु नामु बल संकर कासी । देत सबहि समगति अबिनासी ॥ [Kishkindha 4/10/3-4]

Sages do penance and austerity for numerous births, but at the moment of death, Ram doesn't come; His name is the strength on which Lord Shiva gives liberation to the soul to those who die in Kashi. Such is the glory of Lord's name (Ram) that notwithstanding the deeds done in life by the dying person, if he remembers or chants the name even once while dying, his soul is sure to get liberation from the cycle of rebirth [Doha 6/76].

{As we have noted earlier, Mandodari once again tried her best to persuade Ravana to stop the ruinous war, but he scuttled all her efforts to make peace.}

Mandodari's entreaty to Ravana to make peace:

Geetawali: Raag Maru: Verse no. 6/1

मानु अजहू सिष परिहरि क्रोधु ।
पिय पूरो आयो अब काहि, कहु, करि रघुबीर-बिरोधु ॥1
जेहि ताडुका-सुबाहु मारि, मख राखि जनायो आपु ।
कौतुक ही मारीच नीच मिस प्रकट्यौ विसिष-प्रतापु ॥2
सकल भूप बल गरब सहित तोर्यो कठोर सिवचापु ।
ब्याही जेहि जानकी जीति जग, हर्यो परसुधर-दापु ॥3
कपटकाक साँसति-प्रसाद करि बिनु श्रम बघ्यो बिराधु ।
खर-दूषन-त्रिसिरा-कबंध हति कियो सुखी सुर-साधु ॥4
एकहि बान बालि मार्यो जेहि, जो बल-उदधि अगाधु ।
कहु, धौं कंत कुसल बीती केहि किये राम-अपराधु ॥5

लाँघि न सके लोक-विजयी तुम जासु अनुज-कृत-रेषु ।
 उतरि सिंधु जार्यो प्रचारि पुर जाको पूत बिसेषु ॥ 16
 कृपासिंधु, खल-बन कृसानुसम, जस गावत श्रुति-सेषु ।
 सोइ बिरुदैत वीर कोसलपति, नाथ ! समुझि जिय देषु ॥ 17
 मुनि पुलस्त्य के जस-मयंक महँ कत कलंक हठि होहि ।
 और प्रकार उबार नहीं कहूँ, मैं देख्यो जग जोहि ॥ 18
 चलु, मिलु बेगि कुसल सादर सिय सहित अग्र करि मोहि ।
 तुलसिदास प्रभु सरन-सब सुनि अभय करैंगे तोहि ॥ 19 [6/1]

Verse no. 6/1—Mandodari beseeched Ravana earnestly, ‘My dear! It is yet not too late. Listen to my advice and bid farewell to anger. Dear, you tell me yourself, who has benefitted by rebelling and going against Lord Ram? (1). He, who had killed Tadka and Subahu even in his pre-adolescence, protected sage Vishwamitra's fire-sacrifice manifesting his glory and fame, and showed the might of his arrow by throwing Marich 800 miles away by a headless shaft (2). Then, he vanquished the pride of all the assembled knights, princes and kings by breaking the strong, study Lord Shiva's bow, and married Sita as a symbol of conquering the world, besides pacifying the haughty and angry Parasuram (3). He, who first punished Jayant (who had pricked Sita with his beak and injured her to test the might of the Lord) and then on his seeking refuge at his feet, forgave him; who, by slaying Viradh, Khar-Dusan, Trishara and Kabandh playfully and without much effort, brought about peace and happiness for the Gods and sages / hermits (4). Then, he killed Bali who was an ocean of strength. Say, my dear husband! Who can ever imagine his well-being by offending one such as Ram? (5). Even you, who prides himself to be the conqueror of the world, could not cross the line marked by Laxman at the time of abducting Sita; whose one single messenger leapt across the ocean and burnt the whole city of Lanka from end to end (6). He, whose praises are sung by Sheshnath and Sruti with the words 'merciful and like a fire for the forest of rascals, scoundrels and wretches', Oh Lord! Think in your heart that he is the same famed warrior and champion king of Kaushal (Ayodhya) called Lord Ram (7).

Why are you willingly, adamantly and foolishly proving yourself a sinful scar in the moon-like fame of the race of sage Pulsastya? I have searched the world for all options, but have come to the conclusion that your welfare lies in no other way than this (as suggested by me) (8). Hence, I finally plead before you to immediately proceed to meet Lord Ram, accompanied with Sita and putting me in the front guard of your entourage—this is the only way out for you and your welfare. The Lord shall make you fearless as soon as he hears the word 'I have come to seek refuge' from your mouth (9).’ [6/1]

{ When all the rest of the chief demons were killed, Ravana finally plunged head-on in the battle-field personally. At the climax of the war he was slayed by Lord Ram himself. Ravana thus obtained liberation and deliverance for his soul, finding emancipation and salvation. }

Death of Ravana: Ram Charit Manas

- इहाँ अर्धनिसि रावनु जागा । निज सारथि सन खीझन लागा ॥7
 सठ रनभूमि छड़ाइसि मोही । धिग धिग अधम मंदमति तोही ॥8
 तेहिं पद गहि बहु बिधि समुझावा । भोरु भएँ रथ चढ़ि पुनि धावा ॥9
 सुनि आगवनु दसानन केरा । कपिदल खरभर भयउ घनेरा ॥10
 जहँ तहँ भूधर बिटप उपारी । धाए कटकटाइ भट भारी ॥11 [6/100/7-11]
- दोहा- देखि महा मर्कट प्रबल रावन कीन्ह बिचार ।
 अंतरहित होइ निमेष महुँ कृत माया बिस्तार ॥ [Doha 6/100.]
- छन्द (1) जब कीन्ह तेहिं पाषंड । भए प्रगट जंतु प्रचंड ॥
 बेताल भूत पिसाच । कर धरें धनु नाराच ॥1
 जोगिनि गहें करबाल । एक हाथ मनुज कपाल ॥
 करि सद्य सोनित पान । नाचहिं करहिं बहु गान ॥2
 धरु मारु बोलहिं घोर । रहि पूरि धुनि चहुँ ओर ॥
 मुख बाइ धावहिं खान । तब लगे कीस परान ॥3
 जहँ जाहिं मर्कट भागि । तहँ बरत देखहिं आगि ॥
 भए बिकल बानर भालु । पुनि लाग बरषै बालु ॥4
 जहँ तहँ थकित करि कीस । गर्जेउ बहुरि दससीस ॥
 लछिमन कपीस समेत । भए सकल बीर अचेत ॥5 [6/101/Chanda. i]
- छन्द (2) प्रभु देखि हरष बिषाद उर सुर बदत जय जय जय करी ।
 रघुबीर एकहिं तीर कोपि निमेष महुँ माया हरी ॥1 [6/101/Chanda. ii]
- दोहा- काटे सिर भुज बार बहु मरत न भट लंकेस ।
 प्रभु क्रीड़त सुर सिद्ध मुनि ब्याकुल देखि कलेस ॥ [Doha 6/101.]
- काटत बढ़हिं सीस समुदाई । जिमि प्रति लाभ लोभ अधिकारि ॥ [6/102/1-Kha]

On the final day of the battle, Ravana woke up from his fainting fit in his palace around midnight and scolded his charioteer to have brought him home from the battle-field because it was a most shameful act on his part because he was a brave warrior and the kin of the demon race(7-8).

The charioteer held his feet and soothed his anger with lots of pleadings, explaining the compulsions and the prudence of his decision—for it would have been suicidal to stay in the battle ground in an unconscious state.

As soon as the day dawned the next morning, Ravana mounted his chariot and charged towards the battle-field (9), which caused a tumultuous stir in the monkey's camp (10). Gnashing their teeth, the monkeys grasped trees and mountains from wherever they could find them, and rushed forward to engage the enemy [6/100/7-11].

Finding out-numbered by the ferocious and most powerful monkeys, Ravana decided to exhibit his magical powers to create illusions by becoming invisible (the same trick tried earlier by Meghnad, but—with more effect, cunning and strategem) [Doha 6/100].

As a result, terrible creatures appeared on the battle-field—hobgoblins, ghosts, ghouls, phantoms with bows and arrows in their hands (1). Yoginies (goddess Durga's

companions in battle) with a sword in one hand and upturned skulls from which they drank large draughts of blood in the other hand, danced and sang in merriment (2).

They cried with a blood-curdling yell, 'Catch and kill', which echoed all around. Then they rushed to eat the monkeys who panicked and scattered out of fear in all directions (3), but wherever they went, they were confronted with raging fires. The monkeys were bewildered and in a quandary. Not knowing either what was happening or what to do, they were full of consternation and confusion. Then, to blind them, sand poured like rain, obstructing sight (4). Having thus stunned and confounded the monkeys, Ravana roared derisively, the sound of which caused Laxman and others to faint (5) [6/101/Chha. i /1-5].

Lord Ram, seeing the horrible spectacle and bewilderment of the Gods, was amused, and with a single arrow, he dispersed (cut through, eliminated, removed) the delusion created by Ravana [6/101/Chhand ii/1].

Lord Ram chopped off Ravana's head and limbs repeatedly, but still the demon could not be killed [6/101/Kha]. As soon as the head were severed a fresh crop appeared in their place even as each gain or profit increases the appetite for more [6/102/1].

दोहा- खैंचि सरासन श्रवन लागि छाड़े सर एकतीस ।
 रघुनायक सायक चले मानहुँ काल फनीस ॥ [Doha 6/102.]
 सायक एक नाभि सर सोषा । अपर लगे भुज सिर करि रोषा ॥1
 लै सिर बाहु चले नाराचा । सिर भुज हीन रुंड महि नाचा ॥2
 धरनि धसइ धर धाव प्रचंडा । तब सर हति प्रभु कृत दुइ खंडा ॥3
 गजेंउ मरत घोर रव भारी । कहाँ रामु रन हतौं पचारी ॥4
 डोली भूमि गिरत दसकंधर । छुभित सिंधु सरि दिग्गज भूधर ॥5
 धरनि परेउ द्वौ खंड बढ़ाई । चापि भालु मर्कट समुदाई ॥6
 मंदोदरि आगें भुज सीसा । धरि सर चले जहाँ जगदीसा ॥7
 प्रबिसे सब निषंग महु जाई । देखि सुरन्ह दुंदभीं बजाई ॥8
 तासु तेज समान प्रभु आनन । हरषे देखि संभु चतुरानन ॥9
 जय जय धुनि पूरी ब्रह्मण्डा । जय रघुबीर प्रबल भुजदंडा ॥10
 बरषहिं सुमन देव सुनि बृंदा । जय कृपाल जय जयति मुकुंदा ॥11 [6/103/1-11]

Drawing the bow string right upto his ears, Lord Ram let out a volley of 31 arrows simultaneously which flew like serpents of death [Doha 6/102].

One arrow sucked Ravana's life-sustaining element in his navel, ten severed his heads, and the remaining twenty tore-off his arms at one go (1). The arrows carried off all his arms and heads, while the trunk danced in the battle-field (2). As the trunk made its final plunge towards Lord Ram, the earth shook violently as if there was a quake, so the Lord split it into two with an arrow (3). [The same thing happened with Kumbhakaran's trunk earlier.]

Ravana's last words, like his brother Kumbhakaran, were—'Where is Ram' (4).

The earth, mountains, oceans and the elephants guarding the four quarters shook and swayed as the monster fell (5). The two halves of the trunk fell on the ground, crushing bears and monkeys underneath (6).

The severed heads and arms fell before Ravana's wife Mandodari, and the arrows returned to the quiver of Lord Ram (7). [Compare the death of Ravana with that of Kumbhakaran's.]

The Gods sounded the kettle-drums and trumpets in victory (8).

The soul of Ravana left his body in an effusive shaft of brilliant heavenly light and entered the person of the Lord through his mouth. [Similar was the supreme fate of Kumbhakaran.] Lord Shiva and God Brahma were thrilled and rejoiced at this particular sight¹ (9).

The whole universe resounded with cry of 'Victory, Victory! Glory to Lord Ram, the mightiest of the Mighty' (10). The Gods, sages and others showered flower on the Lord from the heavens (11). [6/103/1-11].

[Note—¹It is very important to understand the significance of this single event of a brilliant light emerging from Ravana and entering the body of the Lord.

Though the physical body of Ravana was that of a cruel demon, but his soul was an enlightened and realised one. He had not brought Sita to satisfy his lust but as a means of finding his final liberation and deliverance from the trap of the demon body in which his holy soul had found its self. He knew that with the body of a demon it is not possible for him to do righteous and noble deeds, and the result would be accumulation of more sins and punishments. Instead of going against the flow of the swift current it is always better to adopt the easier path of flowing along the current atop the tide and eyeing an opportunity to slowly swim towards the land and save oneself from drowning. Ravana had known all along that the Supreme Lord known as Vishnu has come to get rid of him, and seeing this as a golden opportunity to seek his salvation and emancipation he did not think twice in creating enmity with the Lord. This is why he did not listen to anyone who advised him to return Sita because that would have shot down his main goal.

This is also the reason why he had kept Sita in a beautiful and comfortable garden instead of some lock-up or prison where he had kept others whom he captured. He had sent Trijata, the old demoness who was motherly in her demeanours, to protect Sita in the guise of guarding her.

Just think—even after Lanka was burnt to ashes he did not put Sita to any more harassment or subjected her to harsher treatment or sent her to some dark and dingy room to live in solitary confinement where she would not have fresh air and sunlight. If he did have any malefic intentions then wouldn't he have done it? He would have vented all his anger and vengeance upon her after being insulted by Hanuman and Angad, and rebuked by Vibhishan. A ferocious meat-eating demon who eats whole sages and saints alive as fodder, why would he leave Sita alone, especially when the outcome of the war was evident—that he would lose.

There is another very interesting aspect of the whole thing though it is not specifically mentioned anywhere by Tulsidas. Vibhishan had left Lanka and his brother Ravana by taking side of Ravana's enemy, Ram. This is high treason and punishable in the harshest of terms. Now, Vibhishan's wife Salmaa lived in Lanka and she was never targeted by Ravana to suffer in the slightest. Couldn't or wouldn't he have done it with the wife of a traitor in the ordinary course? But

Ravana must have felt happy internally that at least his brother could be saved so as to carry forward the demon race which would have been completely wiped off the face of the earth after this epic war. He thanked Vibhishan in his heart, and ensured that his wife is not punished or is put to any discomfort.

According to the eclectic spiritual philosophy of the Upanishads, the final resting place of the Atma, the soul of the individual living being, is when it merges with the cosmic and the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma. This happens only when the individual is fully enlightened and self-realised. The Atma is an entity that is as splendourous and brilliant as the sun in the sky; it is the opposite of darkness. That is why when one realises the true nature of the Atma he is said to be 'elighted' or 'lighted up'. In the present case the emergence of the light from the body of Ravana and its entering in the body of Lord Ram, a personified form of the Parmatma, is a visible depiction or practical demonstration of the philosophy of the Upanishads outlined above.]

The war ends: Ram Charit Manas:

सुर सुमन बरषहिं हरष संकुल बाज दुंदुभि गहगही ।
संग्राम अंगन राम अंग अनंग बहु सोभा लही ॥ [6/103/Chhand/1]
दोहा- कृपादृष्टि करि बृष्टि प्रभु अभय किए सुर बृंद ।
भालु कीस सब हरषे जय सुख धाम मुकुंद ॥ [Doha 6/103.]
रुदन करत देखीं सब नारी । गयउ बिभीषनु मन दुख भारी ॥4
बंधु दसा बिलोकि दुख कीन्हा । तब प्रभु अनुजहि आयसु दीन्हा ॥5
लछिमन तेहि बहु बिधि समुझायो । बहुरि बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आयो ॥6
कृपादृष्टि प्रभु ताहि बिलोका । करहु क्रिया परिहरि सब सोका ॥7
कीन्हि क्रिया प्रभु आयसु मानी । बिधिवत देस काल जियै जानी ॥8 [6/105/4-8]
दोहा- मंदोदरि आदि सब देइ तिलांजलि ताहि ।
भवन गई रघुपति गुन गन बरनत मन माहि ॥ [Doha 6/105.]

The Gods were full of joy, and they showered flowers and beat their kettle-drums, while Lord Ram looked magnificent in the battle-field [6/103/Chhand/1].

The merciful Lord dispelled the fear of Gods by his gracious glance, while the army of monkeys and bears cheered in joy, 'Glory to Lord Ram, the abode of Bliss.' [Doha 6/103].

Seeing all the women of the household grieving and lamenting, Vibhishan approached them with a heavy and sorrowful heart, and mourned the death of his brother (4). Then, Lord Ram ordered his younger brother Laxman to console Vibhishan (5), who returned to the camp of Lord Ram (6). The compassionate Lord looked upon him most lovingly, and said—'Foresake all sorrows and grievings now, and perform the last rites (funeral) of the dead (7).'

Following the instructions, Vibhishan performed the funeral according to religious and scriptural sanctions, and which were appropriate with respect to the occasion, time and place (8) [6/105/5-8].

Mandodari and others also offered oblation for the peace of the departed souls and returned to their palaces, all the while recounting the excellence and glory of Lord Ram [Doha 6/105].

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/56—

बाप दियो काननु, भो आननु सुभाननु सो,
 बैरी भो दसाननु सो, तीयको हरनु भो ।
 बालि बलसालि दलि, पालि कपिराजको,
 बिभीषनु नेवाजि, सेत सागर-तरनु भो ॥
 घोर सरि हेरि त्रिपुरारि-बिधि हारे हिउँ,
 घायल लखन बीर बानर बरनु भो ।
 ऐसे सोकमें तिलोकु कै बिसोक पलही में,
 सबही को तुलसीको साहेबु सरनु भो ॥56॥ [6/56]

Verse no. 6/56—“Lord Ram’s face never showed anger, remorse, annoyance or dejection and any other negative signs even though his father exiled him, or a warrior as brave as Ravana became his enemy and kidnapped Sita. He protected Sugriv by killing his enemy and arch rival, the powerful Bali, had mercy on Vibhishan, crossed the ocean by constructing a bridge across it, fought such a furious war that even Brahma and Shiva shuddered and had lost all hopes of victory in their hearts, and his brother Laxman was wounded in the battle, got so much smeared with blood and dust that his countenance resembled those of red-faced monkeys.

Even in the face of such adversities and misfortunes, he could redeem the three Lokas (by vanquishing the fear of the Gods)—Tulsidas says that his Lord is such that he gives refuge to all and obliges them fully.”

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/56—

कुंभकरनु हन्यो रन राम, दल्यो दसकंधरु कंधर तोरे ।
 पूषनबंस बिभूषन-पूषन-तेज-प्रताप गरे अरि-ओरे ॥1॥
 देव निसान बजावत, गावत, साँवतु गो मनभावत भो रे ।
 नाचत-बानर-भालु सबै ‘तुलसी’ कहि ‘हा रे ! हहा भै अहो रे’ ॥2॥ [6/57]

Verse no. 6/57—Lord Ram killed Kumbhkaran and Ravana by breaking the latter's neck in the war. In this way the hail (enemy) melted by the heat of the sun (the glory of Lord Ram) (1).

The Gods sing and beat their trumpets and drums because their dependence on Ravana ended and their wishes were fulfilled. Even the monkeys and bears are dancing with joy, cheering, ‘Oh what a wonder! How great! Fantastic!’ (2).”

Kavitawali: Verse no. 6/58—

मारे रन रातिचर रावनु सकुल दलि,
 अनुकूल देव-मुनि फूल बरषतु हैं।
 नाग, नर, किंनर, बिरंचि, हरि, हरु हेरि
 पुलक सरीर हिउँ हेतु हरषतु हैं॥
 बाम ओर जानकी कृपानिधानके बिराजै,
 देखत बिषादु मिटै, मोदु करषतु हैं।
 आयसु भो, लोकनि सिधारे लोकपाल सबै,
 'तुलसी' निहाल कै कै दिये सरखतु हैं॥58॥ [6/58]

Verse no. 6/58—Lord Ram crushed Ravana along with his kin and other demons in the war. Exhilarated and ecstatic at the victory, the Gods and sages showered flowers upon the Lord (from the sky/heaven). Watching the scene, the terrestrial serpents, humans, 'Kinnars' (dancers and singers) as well as Lords Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu became thrilled, and their hearts overflowed with joy, delight, love and affection.

The merciful (Lord Ram) has Sita on his left, the very vision of which results in (provides) freedom from sorrows and enhances happiness. All the Lokpals (guardians) took leave and went to their respective posts (Lokas).

Tulsidas says that the Lord Ram made everyone happy and contented, and declared that now onwards they should all be fearless." [6/58]

{As promised earlier, Lord Ram honoured his words by anointing Vibhishan as the new king of Lanka. }

Vibhishan's crowning as king of Lanka: Ram Charit Manas

आइ बिभीषन पुनि सिरु नायो । कृपासिंधु तब अनुज बोलायो ॥1
 तुम्ह कपीस अंगद नल नीला । जामवंत मारुति नयसीला ॥2
 सब मिलि जाहु बिभीषन साथ । सारेहु तिलक कहेउ रघुनाथा ॥3
 पिता बचन मैं नगर न आवउँ । आपु सरिस कपि अनुज पठावउँ ॥4
 तुरत चले कपि सुनि प्रभु बचना । कीन्ही जाइ तिलक की रचना ॥5
 सादर सिंहासन बैठारी । तिलक सारि अस्तुति अनुसारी ॥6 [6/106/1-6]

After performing the funeral rites, Vibhishan came back and bowed his head to Lord Ram, who then called Laxman (1), and ordered, 'You, along with Sugriv, Angad, Nal, Nil, Jamvant, Hanuman and others (2), go with Vibhishan and crown him the king of Lanka (3). In deference to my father's wishes, I would not enter a city/town, but am sending you (Laxman) as my representative for the purpose (4).'

The monkeys started for the job forthwith, and made all arrangements for the coronation of Vibhishan (5). They respectfully put Vibhishan on the throne (of Lanka) and put a Tilak mark on his forehead as a symbol of his anointment and investing him with the overignty of Lanka. [The Tilak mark is made in the centre of the forehead just above the middle point of the two eyebrows.] (6). [6/106/1-6].

{Once Vibhishan was crowned, the Lord asked Hunuman to go and inform Sita of the good news, and bring back her news. Then he ordered his companions led by the newly appointed king of Lanka, Vibhishan, to bring Sita to him.}

Meeting of Sita and Lord Ram : Ram Charit Manas

पुनि प्रभु बोलि लियउ हनुमाना । लंका जाहु कहेउ भगवाना ॥1
 समाचार जानकिहि सुनावहु । तासु कुसल लै तुम्ह चलि आवहु ॥2
 तब हनुमंत नगर महुँ आए । सुनि निसिचरी निसाचर धाए ॥3
 बहु प्रकार तिन्ह पूजा कीन्ही । जनकसुता देखाइ पुनि दीन्ही ॥4
 दूरिहि ते प्रनाम कपि कीन्हा । रघुपति दूत जानकी चीन्हा ॥5
 कहहु तात प्रभु कृपानिकेता । कुसल अनुज कपि सेन समेता ॥6
 सब बिधि कुसल कोसलाधीसा । मातु समर जीत्यो दससीसा ॥7
 अबिचल राजु बिभीषन पायो । सुनि कपि बचन हरष उर छायो ॥8 [6/107/1-8]
 अब सोइ जतन करहु तुम्ह ताता । देखौं नयन स्याम मृदु गाता ॥1
 तब हनुमान राम पहिँ जाई । जनकसुता कै कुसल सुनाई ॥2
 सुनि संदेसु भानुकुलभूषन । बोलि लिए जुबराज बिभीषन ॥3
 मारुतसुत के संग सिधावहु । सादर जनकसुतहि लै आवहु ॥4
 तुरतहि सकल गए जहँ सीता । सेवहिं सब निसिचरीं बिनीता ॥5
 बेगि बिभीषन तिन्हहि सिखायो । तिन्ह बहु बिधि मज्जन करवायो ॥6
 बहु प्रकार भूषन पहिराए । सिबिका रुचिर साजि पुनि ल्याए ॥7
 ता पर हरषि चढ़ी बैदेही । सुमिरि राम सुखधाम सनेही ॥8
 कह रघुबीर कहा मम मानहु । सीतहि सखा पयादें आनहु ॥11
 देखहुँ कपि जननी की नाई । बिहसि कहा रघुनाथ गोसाई ॥12 [6/108/1-8,11-12]

Lord Sri Ram then summoned Hanuman and asked him to go to Lanka and give the happy tidings to Sita, and return with the news of her welfare (1-2).

When Hanuman reached the city, the demons and demonesses came hastily, worshipped him and escorted him to where Sita was (3-4). Hanuman bowed his head from a distance as soon as he saw her, and she immediately recognised him to be Lord Ram's messenger (5). 'Say, Son! How is my Lord', she asked, and Hanuman replied, 'The Lord, along with his younger brother, monkeys and the army are fine (6). Lord Ram is fine by all means, mother, and he has got victory over the 10-headed demon in the war (7). Vibhishan has got everlasting crown of Lanka.'

Hearing Hanuman's pleasing words, immense joy and happiness spread over her heart (8). [6/107/1-8].

She said, 'Son, make suitable arrangements so that I can meet my beloved Lord.' (1).

Then Hanuman returned to Ram and told him Sita's welfare (2), hearing which he called Vibhishan and Prince Angad and said (3)—'Go along with Hanuman, and respectfully bring Sita back to me here (4).'

Immediately, all of them went to Sita while she was being served by the demonesses¹ (5).

Vibhishan immediately advised them to bathe Sita (6), adorn her with ornaments and jewellery and brought a palanquin (a sort of wooden carriage lifted by men in the fore and rear) duly decorated (7). Sita mounted it cheerfully, remembering her Lord (8).

When Lord Ram saw them bringing Sita in such pomp and pageantry, he smiled and advised them, 'Friends, listen to me. Bring Sita on foot (11). And monkeys, look upon her as you would look and treat your mother.' (12). [6/108/1-8,11-12]

[Note—¹These are the very ladies who had been tormenting her during the period of her captivity under Ravana, and had jeered, clapped, mocked, made merry and behaved most derisively in anticipatory fun as if a new clown-show was in town to entertain them, or a feast is being held, or a monkey-trainer has come for a road-show when Ravana had ordered that Hanuman's tail be wrapped in cloth and set on fire.

But with the change of guard, as is the wont of citizens everywhere in this world, they immediately changed sides and cheered the new leader. They so quickly adapted themselves to changed circumstances like a chameleon changes colour that they changed loyalties with a drop of a hat or the blinking of an eyelid. They have no qualms or scruples, or shall we say, they are wise, cunning and prudent to the extreme to know where their interests and well-being lay under the changed fortunes. That is why, it is said, that a king who rules with compassion, mercy and understanding rules the heart of his subjects, and he is always lamented or remembered for generations even after he leaves the throne or dies. This situation is evident in the case of Lord Ram—when he left Ayodhya, the citizens ran behind his chariot because they could not tolerate his separation. A tyrant, a dictator or a despot is respected out of fear and reprisal, and as soon as he's removed, the citizens react in the same manner as those of Lanka.]

The Victorious Lord Ram: Geetawali: Raag Kanhara: Verse no. 6/16—

राजत राम काम-सत सुंदर ।
 रिपु रन जीति अनुज संग सोभित, फेरत चाप-बिसिष बनरुह-कर ।।1
 स्याम सरीर रुचिर श्रम-सीकर, सोनित-कन बिच बीच मनोहर ।
 जनु खद्योत-निकर, हरिहित-गन, भ्राजत मरकत-सैल-सिखरपर ।।2
 घायल बीर बिराजत चहुँ दिसि, हरषित सकल रिच्छ अरु बनचर ।
 कुसुमित किंसुक-तरु-समूह महँ, तरुन तमाल बिसाल बिटप बर ।।3
 राजिव-नयन बिलोकि कृपा करि, किए अभय मुनि-नाग, बिबुध-नर
 तुलसिदास यह रूप अनूपम हिय-सरोज बसि दुसह बिपतिहर ।।4 [6/16]

Verse no. 6/16—Having conquered his enemy, victorious Lord Ram is present in the battlefield with his brother Laxman. He appears appealing and magnificent like thousands of Kamdeos (cupids) at once, and is moving his hands on his bows and arrows (1). Sweat drops interspersed with blood drops are glistening on his dark complexioned body as if luminescent herbs look magnificent among hordes of glow-worms on the summit of Mt. Markat Mani (2). Wounded warriors are sitting around him. All those monkeys and bears

are extremely happy. Lord Ram looks as magnificent as a large and young Tamaal Tree amongst blossoming Kinskuk Trees (3). At that moment, that lotus-eyed Lord glanced at the Gods, hermits, legendary serpents and men and made them fearless.

Tulsidas prays that this vision of peerless beauty which vanquishes all mighty troubles, should ever reside in his heart (4). [6/16].

{ After the war was won, Sita freed from the clutches of the demons and reunited with the Lord, and Vibhishan installed on the throne of Lanka, Lord Ram boarded the air-vehicle called Pushpuk along with his chief companions and embarked on the journey home. This particular vehicle was owned by Kuber, the treasurer of the Gods, and was earlier snatched by Ravana from him and brought to Lanka for his personal use. It was not an ordinary plane—for it could expand in size to accomodate as many passengers as wanted to board it, say even an entire army, and it had no pilot to drive it because it was self-propelled and self-steered. It went by the verbal orders of the chief passenger, and it could have had a navigation system based on a computer which could be operated by voice, and into which oral commands were fed about the coordinates of the destination. The rest was automatic. }

Departure of the victorious Lord Ram for Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

- दोहा- भरत दसा सुमिरत मोहि निमिष कल्प सम जात ॥ Ka
 तापस बेष गात कृस जपत निरंतर मोहि ।
 देखौं बेगि सो जतनु करु सखा निहोरउँ तोहि ॥ Kha
 बीतैं अवधि जाउँ जौं जिअत न पावउँ बीर ।
 सुमिरत अनुज प्रीति प्रभु पुनि पुनि पुलक सरीर ॥ Ga [Doha 6/116/Ka, Kha and Ga.]
 बहुरि बिभीषन भवन सिधायो । मनि गन बसन बिमान भरायो ॥3
 लै पुष्पक प्रभु आगें राखा । हँसि करि कृपासिंधु तब भाषा ॥4
 चढ़ि बिमान सुनु सखा बिभीषन । गगन जाइ बरषहु पट भूषन ॥5
 नभ पर जाइ बिभीषन तबही । बरषि दिए मनि अंबर सबही ॥6
 जोइ जोइ मन भावइ सोइ लेहीं । 7 [6/117/3-7]
- दोहा- कपिपति नील रीछपति अंगद नल हनुमान ।
 सहित बिभीषन अपर जे जूथप कपि बलवान ॥ [Doha 6/118Kha.]
 अतिसय प्रीति देखि रघुगई । लीन्हे सकल बिमान चढ़ाई ॥1
 मन महुँ बिप्र चरन सिरु नायो । उत्तर दिसिहि बिमान चलायो ॥2
 चलत बिमानु कोलाहल होई । जय रघुबीर कहइ सबु कोई ॥3
 सिंहासन अति उच्च मनोहर । श्री समेत प्रभु बैठे ता पर ॥4
 रुचिर बिमान चलेउ अति आतुर । कीन्ही सुमन बृष्टि हरषे सुर ॥6
 परम सुखद चलि त्रिविध बयारी । सागर सर सरि निर्मल बारी ॥7
 सगुन होहि सुंदर चहुँ पासा । मन प्रसन्न निर्मल नभ आसा ॥8 [6/119/1-4,6-8]
 पुनि देखु अवधपुरी अति पावनि । त्रिविध ताप भव रोग नसावनि ॥9 [6/120/9]
- दोहा- सीता सहित अवध कहुँ कीन्ह कृपाल प्रनाम ।

सजल नयन तन पुलकित पुनि पुनि हरषित राम ॥ [Doha 6/120Ka.]

प्रभु हनुमंतहि कहा बुझाई । धरि बटु रूप अवधपुर जाई ॥1

भरतहि कुसल हमारि सुनाएहु । समाचार लै तुम्ह चलि आएहु ॥2

तुरत पवनसुत गवनत भयऊ ॥3 [6/121/1-3]

Lord Ram told Vibhishan, 'Listen brother! When I recollect Bharat's condition, every passing moment seems like an age to me, because clad like a hermit and with wasted body, he constantly chants my name. Therefore, I request you, my friend, to take necessary steps so that I can see and meet him very soon [6/116/0, A,B]. If I go after the expiry of 14 year term, chances are that I will not find him alive.' Saying these words and remembering Bharat's affection and devotion for him, Lord Ram's body was thrilled and his heart overwhelmed with surging emotions of love and affection for his younger brother Bharat. [6/116/0-C]

Vibhishan went to his palace and loaded the aerial-vehicle called 'Puspak' with costly gifts comprising ornaments, gems, clothes etc (3). He placed it before Lord Ram, whence Lord Ram laughed (4) and said, 'Mount it and go to the sky; then drop all these from the air!' (5). So Vibhishan rode to the sky and showered all the valuables to the ground, and they were all picked up by the monkeys according to their likings and fancy (6-7). [6/117/3-7].

Thereafter, Lord Ram boarded the air-craft (Puspak), and seeing that his companions Sugriv, Nil, Jamvant, Angad, Nal, Hanuman, Vibhishan and other warrior commanders were extremely eager to come along with him to Ayodhya, he allowed them to accompany him on board the craft on his way back to Ayodhya [6/118/0-Kha; 6/119/1]. Then, bowing his head to elders, the air vehicle started on its journey towards the north (2). As soon as the craft was air-borne, there were cheers and commotion—all the companions started shouting 'glory to Lord Ram' (3). Lord Ram and Sita sat on a high and charming throne on the craft, while others crowded around him (4). [6/119/2-4].

The magnificent air-craft moved fast; the Gods showered flowers and were excited and thrilled at this sight (6); a soothing soft and fragrant breeze blew; the water of the oceans, rivers and lakes appeared crystal clear; the sky was clear; and potent good omens appeared everywhere (7-8). [6/119/6-8].

The air-craft finally reached the periphery of Ayodhya, and the city was sighted from the air. Lord Ram described Ayodhya as being very holy and un-corrupt, as being a place which is as holy as a pilgrim site, and therefore it helps one to overcome all his grief and torments caused by the three horrors of existence, called the Traitaps*. The city was a divine one where no diseases existed in any form, and it could rid one from the cycle of birth and death.

[*The three Traitaps are the three torments called Adhidaivik, Adhibhautik and Adhyatmik. They refer to opposed stars and gods, problems created by life on the earth, and spiritual problems.] [6/120/9].

Lord Ram and Sita bowed their heads to such an auspicious and holy city of Ayodhya as described herein above. The Lord's eyes were full of tears, and his body was thrilled again and again at the sight of this divine city [Doha 6/120 Ka].

Then, Lord Ram instructed Hanuman to go to Ayodhya disguised as a celibate Brahmin (called a Brahmachari) (1), tell Bharat about the good and happy tidings, and

return with the news of his welfare (2). Hanuman started off immediately for the (final) mission (3) [6/121/1-3].

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Chapter 9

Uttar Kand

{This chapter deals with the following main events in Lord Ram's life on this earth—his return to Ayodhya from 14-year exile, meeting Bharat, celebrations, and coronation as King of the kingdom of Ayodhya.

The word 'Uttar' means the last part or the concluding part. Since the Ramayan narrated by Goswami Tulsidas ends with this Kand, it has been named 'Uttar Kand'.}

Arrival at Ayodhya: Ram Charit Manas

- दोहा- रहा एक दिन अवधि कर अति आरत पुर लोग ।
जहाँ तहाँ सोचहिं नारि नर कृस तन राम बियोग ।।1
सगुन होहिं सुंदर सकल मन प्रसन्न सब केर ।
प्रभु आगवन जनाव जनु नगर रम्य चहुँ फेर ।।2
कौसल्यादि मातु सब मन अनंद अस होइ ।
आयउ प्रभु श्रीअनुज जुत कहन चहत अब कोइ ।।3
भरत नयन भुज दच्छिन फरकत बारहिं बार ।
जानि सगुन मन हरष अति लागे करन बिचार ।। [Doha 7/0/1-4]
मोरे जियँ भरोस दृढ़ सोई । मिलिहहिं राम सगुन सुभ होई ।।7
बीतें अवधि रहहिं जौँ प्राना । अधम कवन जग मोहि समाना ।।8 [7/1/7-8]
- दोहा- राम बिरह सागर महँ भरत मगन मन होत ।
बिप्र रूप धरि पवन सुत आइ गयउ जनु पोत ।।Ka
बैठे देखि कुसासन जटा मुकुट कृस गात ।
राम राम रघुपति जपत स्रवत नयन जलजात ।। Kha [Doha 7/1 Ka, Kha.]
देखत हनूमान अति हरषेउ । पुलक गात लोचन जल बरषेउ ।।1
मन महँ बहुत भाँति सुख मानी । बोलेउ श्रवन सुधा सम बानी ।।2
जासु बिरहँ सोचहु दिन राती । रटहु निरंतर गुन गन पाँती ।।3
रघुकुल तिलक सुजन सुखदाता । आयउ कुसल देव मुनि त्राता ।।4
रिपु रन जीति सुजस सुर गावत । सीता सहित अनुज प्रभु आवत ।।5
सुनत बचन बिसरे सब दूखा । तृषावंत जिमि पाइ पियूषा ।।6

को तुम्ह तात कहाँ ते आए । मोहि परम प्रिय बचन सुनाए ॥7
 मारुत सुत मैं कपि हनुमाना । नामु मोर सुनु कृपानिधाना ॥8
 दीनबंधु रघुपति कर किंकर । सुनत भरत भेंटेउ उठि सादर ॥9
 मिलत प्रेम नहिं हृदयँ समाता । नयन स्रवत जल पुलकित गाता ॥10
 कपि तव दरस सकल दुख बीते । मिले आजु मोहि राम पिरीते ॥11
 बार बार बूझी कुसलाता । तो कहूँ देउँ काह सुनु भ्राता ॥12
 एहि संदेस सरिस जग माहीं । करि बिचार देखेउँ कछु नहीं ॥13 [7/2/1-13]

Only one day was left for Ram's exile of fourteen years to end, which made the people of Ayodhya extremely anxious and nervous. They had become weak and frail in body due to the sorrow of separation from their Lord Sri Ram over the past fourteen years (1).

Meanwhile, auspicious omens occurred everywhere, the heart of everyone felt cheerful spontaneously, and the city appeared brightened as if from a hidden, invisible internal glow (2). The heart of Kaushalya (Ram's mother) and other mothers were so inwardly happy as if someone was just about to break the happy news that Ram has returned (3). Bharat's right eyelids and arms throbbed continuously signifying some good happening, which made him hopeful and ponder over the cause for such good omens (4) [7/0/1-4]. He thought—'I have a firm conviction in my heart that I shall meet Lord Ram because that is the only conclusion deduced from the positive omens (7). If I survive after the exile period, then surely no one would be as despicable and loathsome in this world as me (8).' [7/1/7-8].

Bharat was almost being drowned in the grief of Ram's separation when Hanuman appeared in the form of a Brahmin (as if a boat has arrived to save the drowning Bharat). Hanuman found Bharat sitting on a mat of Kusha grass, body wasted, hairs matted, tears rolling down his eyes, and constantly chanting Lord Ram's name [Doha 7/1/Ka, Kha].

Hanuman was thrilled at the sight, tears also rolled down his eyes (1), and feeling immensely joyful at heart, he spoke words which seemed nectar for the ears (2).

'Lord Ram, for whom you are thinking always and constantly chanting his name in his remembrance, has come back safely along with Sita and Laxman, having conquered his enemy and praised by the Gods (3-5).'

Hearing these words, all the sorrows of Bharat vanished, as if a thirsty man has drunk nectar (6). 'Who are you dear, and from where have you come', he asked (7).

'I am Hanuman, the son of Marut (the Wind-God), and a faithful servant of Lord Sri Ram,' Hanuman replied, whereupon Bharat jumped up and respectfully met him with tears rolling down, body thrilled, and the heart overbrimming with affection and love of the highest and the purest kind (8-10).

Bharat said, 'Dear, all my sorrows have disappeared on meeting you. I feel like having embraced my beloved Lord Ram by embracing you (11). How are you, say. What reward can I give you for such a message (that Lord Ram has come back) because there is nothing to match it in this world (12-13).' [7/2/1-13].

Geetawali: Raag Asawari: Verse no. 6/17—

अवधि आजु किधौँ औरो दिन ह्वै है ।

चढ़ि धौरहर, बिलोकि दषिन दिसि, बूझ धौं पथिक कहाँते आये वै हैं ।।1
 बहुरि बिचारि हारि हिय सोचति, पुलकि गात लागे लोचन च्वैहैं ।
 निज बासरनि बरष पुरवैगो बिधि, मेरे तहाँ करम कठिन कृत क्वैहैं
 बन रघुबीर, मातु गृह जीवति, निलज प्रान सुनि सुनि सुख स्वैहैं ।
 तुलसिदास मो-सी-कठोर-चित कुलिस-सालभंजनि को ह्वै हैं ।।3 [6/17]

Verse no. 6/17—When the days of exile were almost over, mother Kaushalya became very anxious about Lord Ram's return. She broods and became pensive. She thinks thus—‘Why, does the period end today, or are some more days left?’

Then going to the terrace of her palace and looking southwards, she says on sighting few pedestrians approaching the city, ‘Find out from where those people are coming ?’ (1).

Then realising that the last day of the exile period is yet to come, her heart fills with gloom and despair, her body is thrilled, tears roll down her eyes, and she speaks poignantly to herself, ‘It appears that the Vidhata (God Brahma, the creator) shall count those fourteen years according to his own calculations (because, Brahma’s days are equivalent to hundreds of thousands of earth days), and it’s a very long time to wait for me any longer (2). Oh, Ram is in forest and his mother enjoys the comforts of home—now this shameless life has to bear this ignominy for the rest of my life! Well, where else can there be a hard and emotionless statue like me?’ (3). [6/17].

Geetawali: Raag Sorath: Verse no. 6/19—

बैठि सगुन मनावति माता ।
 कब ऐहैं मेरे बाल कुसल घर, कहहु, काग ! फुरि बाता ।।1
 दूध-भातकी दोनी दैहौं, सोने चोंच मढ़ैहौं ।
 जब सिय-सहित बिलोकि नयन भरि राम-लषन उर लैहौं ।।2
 अवधि समीप जानि जननी जिय अति आतुर अकुलानी ।
 गनक बोलाइ, पाँय परि पूछति प्रेम-मगन मृदु बानी ।।3
 तेहि अवसर कोउ भरत निकटतें समाचार लै आयो ।
 प्रभु आगमन सुनत तुलसी मनो मीन मरत जल पायो ।।4 [6/19]

Verse no. 6/19—[Mother Kaushalya sights a crow and talks with it. It is believed that when one eagerly awaits some news and a crow comes to call and crows, there is surely some good news coming in. It is an auspicious omen.]

The mother looks for good omens. She says, ‘Oh crow! Tell me the truth, when shall my children come back home safely? (1).

When I embrace my beloved Ram-Sita and Laxman and see them till my eyes are satisfied (i.e. see them to my heart’s content), I shall feed you milk and rice, and get your beak decorated (plated) with gold.’ (2).

Then as the final days of exile draw nearer, she summons a soothsayer (astrologer), and falling at his feet, overwhelmed with emotion, she asks him to prophesize when Lord Ram is going to come back (3).

Just at that time a messenger arrived from Bharat's place with the news of Lord Ram's arrival. Tulsidas says that as soon as she heard about Ram's arrival from his mouth, her condition was like a fish, on the verge of dying, being restored to water (4). [6/19].

Ram Charit Manas :

- हरषि भरत कोसलपुर आए । समाचार सब गुरहि सुनाए ॥1
 पुनि मंदिर महँ बात जनाई । आवत नगर कुसल रघुराई ॥2
 सुनत सकल जननीं उठि धाई । कहि प्रभु कुसल भरत समुझाई ॥3
 समाचार पुरबासिन्ह पाए । नर अरु नारि हरषि सब धाए ॥4
 अवधपुरी प्रभु आवत जानी । भई सकल सोभा कै खानी ॥9
 बहइ सुहावन त्रिविध समीरा । भई सरजू अति निर्मल नीरा ॥10 [7/3/1-4,9-10]
- दोहा- हरषित गुर परिजन अनुज भूसुर बृंद समेत ।
 चले भरत मन प्रेम अति सन्मुख कृपानिकेत ॥Ka
 बहुतक चढ़ीं अटारिन्ह करहिं निरखहिं गगन बिमान ।
 देखि मधुर सुर हरषित करहिं सुमंगल गान ॥Kha [Doha 7/3 Ka, Kha.]
- दोहा- आवत देखि लोग सब कृपासिंधु भगवान ।
 नगर निकट प्रभु प्रेरेउ उतरेउ भूमि बिमान ॥ Ka
 उतरि कहेउ प्रभु पुष्पकहि तुम्ह कुबेर पहिं जाहु ।
 प्रेरित राम चलेउ सो हरषु बिरहु अति ताहु ॥ Kha [Doha 7/4 Ka, Kha.]
 आए भरत संग सब लोग । कृस तन श्रीरघुबीर बियोगा ॥1
 बामदेव बसिष्ट मुनिनायक । देखे प्रभु महि धरि धनु सायक ॥2
 धाइ धरे गुर चरन सरोरुह । अनुज सहित अति पुलक तनोरुह ॥3
 भेंटि कुसल बूझी मुनिराया । हमरें कुसल तुम्हारिहिं दायी ॥4
 सकल द्विजन्ह मिलि नायउ माथा । धर्म धुरंधर रघुकुलनाथा ॥5
 गहे भरत पुनि प्रभु पद पंकज । नमत जिन्हहि सुर मुनि संकर अज ॥6
 परे भूमि नहिं उठत उठाए । बर करि कृपासिंधु उर लाए ॥7 [7/5/1-7]
- दोहा- पुनि प्रभु हरषि सत्रुहन भेंटे हृदयँ लगाइ ।
 लछिमन भरत मिले तब परम प्रेम दोउ भाइ ॥ [Doha 7/5.]
 भरतानुज लछिमन पुनि भेंटे । दुसह बिरह संभव दुख मेटे ॥1
 सीता चरन भरत सिरु नावा । अनुज समेत परम सुख पावा ॥2
 प्रभु बिलोकि हरषे पुरबासी । जनित बियोग बिपति सब नासी ॥3
 प्रेमातुर सब लोग निहारी । कौतुक कीन्ह कृपाल खरारी ॥4
 अमित रूप प्रगटे तेहि काला । जथाजोग मिले सबहि कृपाला ॥5
 कृपादृष्टि रघुबीर बिलोकी । किए सकल नर नारि बिसोकी ॥6
 एहि बिधि सबहि सुखी करि रामा । आगें चले सीत गुन धामा ॥7
 कौसल्यादि मातु सब धाई । निरखि बच्छ जनु धेनु लवाई ॥8 [7/6/1-6, 7-8]
- दोहा- भेटेउ तनय सुमित्राँ राम चरन रति जानि ।

रामहि मिलत कैकई हृदयँ बहुत सकुचानि ।। Ka
 लछिमन सब मातन्ह मिलि हरषे आसिष पाइ ।
 कैकई कहँ पुनि पुनि मिले मन कर छोभु न जाइ ।। Kha [Doha 7/6 Ka, Kha.]
 सासुन्ह सबनि मिली बैदेही । चरनन्ह लागि हरषु अति तेही ।।।
 देहिं असीस बूझि कुसलाता । होइ अचल तुम्हार अहिवाता ।।2 [7/7/1-2]

Bharat came to the city of Ayodhya (from Nandigram, where he had passed the 14 years of exile period as a hermit; a place appx. 16–18 Km from Ayodhya) and told sage Vashistha the happy news (1). Then the auspicious news was sent to the palace that Lord Ram has returned safely (2). All the mothers ran out to enquire, and were informed by him about Lord Ram's welfare (3). The news spread like wildfire in the city, and the inhabitants ran out, all thrilled and excited to the extreme (4).

Ayodhya appeared to be a mine of beauty when this good news arrived (9). A delightful breeze blew softly; it was cool and fragrant. The waters of river Saryu became crystal clear (10). [7/3/1-4, 9-10].

Accompanied by his guru (Vashistha), kinsmen, younger brother (Shatrughan), Brahmins etc., Bharat proceeded to meet Lord Ram, his heart full of affection (A). The womenfolk had climbed up the attics and terrace of their homes to watch the air-craft (Puspak) arrive from the sky (B). [Doha 7/3 Ka, Kha].

When Lord Ram observed from the sky the city pouring out to meet him, he ordered the craft to land on the ground, and so it touched down near the city, on its outskirts (Ka). Disembarking, Lord Ram ordered the Puspak plane to go back to its original owner, God Kuber. Even the plane felt heavy at heart on being forced to separate from the Lord (Kha). [Doha 7/4 Ka, Kha].

Bharat arrived along with all the people, all of whom had become thin and emaciated in the agony of Lord Ram's separation for the fourteen long years of exile (1). When Lord Ram saw the sages Vamdev, Vashistha etc., he alongwith Laxman ran towards them in thrill, fell down and clasped their feet in reverence (2-3). When asked about his welfare, Lord Ram replied, 'Sages, we are happy, thanks to your blessings.' (4).

Then he met all the sages and holy men who had eagerly assembled there to welcome their Lord (5).

Bharat clasped the feet of the Lord, who is worshipped by Lord Shiva, Gods, sages and holy men (6). He fell to the ground like a stick, and would not rise up. So Lord Ram forcefully lifted him and clasped him most affectionately and most warmly to his bosom (7). [7/5/1-7].

Thereafter, Lord Ram embraced Shatrughan, and Laxman affectionately met Bharat [Doha 7/5] and his younger brother Shatrughan. In this way, all the four brothers removed the terrible agony of separation and misunderstanding from each other (1). Bharat and Shatrughan then bowed their heads at the feet of Sita (2). The citizens were thrilled at the sight of their Lord, and all their woes arising out of Lord Ram's long separation, vanished (3). Seeing all people eager to embrace him independently, the Lord performed a miracle— he assumed numerous forms all at once, and met all the citizens simultaneously individually. He spread his merciful glance in all directions and removed the sorrows of all men and women (4-6).

Then, the Lord proceeded to meet his mother Kaushalya, who ran as a cow does on seeing her calf (7-8). [7/6/1-6,7-8]. Sumitra met her son (Laxman) knowing him to be a true devotee of the Lord's feet, while Kaikeyi was very hesitant and ashamed to meet Lord Ram (Ka). Laxman met all the mothers, but met Kaikeyi several time because the anguish and bitterness of feeling was difficult to erase (Kha). [Doha 7/6 Ka, Kha].

Sita met all her mothers-in-law, and they blessed her husband (Ram) with an eternal life. [7/7/1-2]

पुनि रघुपति सब सखा बोलाए । मुनि पद लागहु सकल सिखाए ॥5
गुरु बसिष्ठ कुलपूज्य हमारे । इन्ह की कृपाँ दनुज रन मारे ॥6
ए सब सखा सुनहु मुनि मेरे । भए समर सागर कहँ बेरे ॥7
मम हित लागि जन्म इन्ह हारे । भरतहु ते मोहि अधिक पिआरे ॥8 [7/8/5-8]

Then, Lord Ram summoned all his friends (who had accompanied him from Lanka) and advised them to pay their respects to sage Vashistha (5). He told them that it was due to the blessing of Vashistha, who was the guru of his race, that killed the demon (6). Then, addressing Vashistha, he said, "Sage, these are my friends who had been a buoy to take me across the 'Ocean of Battle'. They have staked their lives for me; I love them more than Bharat." (7-8) [7/8/5-6,7-8]

Coronation of Lord Ram: Ram Charit Manas

गुरु बसिष्ठ द्विज लिए बुलाई । आजु सुघरी सुदिन समुदाई ॥4
सब द्विज देहु हरषि अनुसासन । रामचंद्र बैठहिं सिंघासन ॥5
मुनि बसिष्ठ के बचन सुहाए । सुनत सकल बिप्रन्ह अति भाए ॥6
कहहिं बचन मृदु बिप्र अनेका । जग अभिराम राम अभिषेका ॥7
अब मुनिबर बिलंब नहिं कीजै । महाराज कहँ तिलक करीजै ॥8 [7/10/4-8]
अवधपुरी अति रुचिर बनाई । देवन्ह सुमन बृष्टि झरि लाई ॥ [7/11/1]
दोहा- सुनु खगेस तेहि अवसर ब्रह्मा सिव मुनि बृंद ।
चढ़ि बिमान आए सब सुर देखन सुखकंद ॥ [Doha 7/11 Ga.]
प्रभु बिलोकि मुनि मन अनुरागा । तुरत दिव्य सिंघासन मागा ॥1
रबि सम तेज सो बरनि न जाई । बैठे राम द्विजन्ह सिरु नाई ॥2
जनकसुता समेत रघुगई । पेखि प्रहरषे मुनि समुदाई ॥3
बेद मन्त्र तब द्विजन्ह उचारे । नभ सुर मुनि जय जयति पुकारे ॥4
प्रथम तिलक बसिष्ठ मुनि कीन्हा । पुनि सब बिप्रन्ह आयसु दीन्हा ॥5
सिंघासन पर त्रिभुवन साई । देखि सुरन्ह दुंदभी बजाई ॥8 [7/12/1-5,8]

Guru Vashistha immediately summoned all the elders of the city and said, 'Today is the most auspicious day and time (4). Give your joint and unanimous permission so that Lord Ram can be put on the throne immediately (5).'

All the Brahmins (the wise ones, the city elders) were immensely pleased at these words (6) and replied, 'Ram's coronation will bring delight to the whole world (7). So, oh sage, do not delay for even a moment, and put a Tilak mark on Lord Ram's forehead as a token of his sovereignty (8).' [7/10/4-8]."

For that occasion, the city of Ayodhya was most tastefully decorated, and Gods showered flowers on it [7/11/1].

The sage crow Kagbhusund told the bird king Garuda that for that occasion, Brahma (the creator) and Shiva (the concluder of creation) as well as all other saints and sages boarded their air-carriers and arrived to watch the ceremony [Doha 7/11 Ga].

Sage Vashistha's heart overflowed with joy and affection, and he asked for a heavenly throne (1) which was as bright and glowing as a sun, on which Lord Ram took his seat after paying respects to the elders (2). The whole community of sages, saints and holy men were overwhelmed with joy on seeing Lord Ram and Sita as the King and Queen of Ayodhya (3). The elders began to chant Vedic hymns, and the Gods showered flowers from the heaven (4). First the ceremonial Tilak Mark (as a token of Lord Ram being made sovereign of not only Ayodhya but of the whole world, as well as the hearts of all the devotees) was put on his forehead by sage Vashistha, followed by blessings from all the assembled elders (5).

The Gods blew their trumpets on seeing the Lord of Tribhuvan (the 3 worlds-heaven, earth and subterranean) crowned and seated on the Throne (8). [7/12/1-5, 8].

[Note—According the Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Can'to No. 130, Verse No. 92-93, Laxman refused to become a Prince Regent; so Bharat was crowned Prince Regent against his wishes.]

Celebrations in Ayodhya: Geetawali: Raag Dhanasri: Verse no. 6/21—

सुनियत सागरसेतु बँधायो ।
 कोसलपति की कुसल सकल सुधि कोउ इक दूत भरत पहुँ ल्यायो ।।1
 बध्यो बिराध, त्रिसिर, खर-दूषन सूर्पनखाको रूप नसायो ।
 हति कबंध, बल-अंध बालि दलि, कृपासिंधु सुग्रीव बसायो ।।2
 सरनागत अपनाइ बिभीषन, रावन सकुल समूल बहायो ।
 बिबुध-समाज निवाजि, बाँह दै, बंदिछोर बर बिरद कहायो ।।3
 एक-एक सों समाचार सुनि नगर लोग जहँ तहँ सब धायो ।
 घन-धुनि अकनि मुदित मयूर-ज्यों, बूड़त जलधि पार-सो पायो ।।4
 'अवधि आजु, यों कहत परसपर, बेगि बिमान निकट पुर आयो ।
 उतरि अनुज-अनुगनि समेत प्रभु गुर-द्विजगन सिर नायो ।।5
 जो जेहि जोग राम तेहि बिधि मिलि, सबके मन अति मोद बढ़ायो ।
 भेंटी मातु, भरत भरतानुज, क्यों कहौं प्रेम अमित अनमायो ।।6
 तेहीं दिन मुनिवृंद अनंदित तुरत तिलक को साज सजायो ।
 महाराज रघुवंस-नाथको सादर तुलसिदास गुन गायो ।।7 [6/21]

Verse no. 6/21—Hearing the various events and stories related to the period of Lord Ram's sojourn in the forest, the citizens of Ayodhya said, 'Why, it is heard that Lord Ram had constructed a bridge across the ocean! Some messenger had brought the news of Lord Ram's safety and welfare to Bharat (1). It is said that Lord Ram had slayed the demons Viradh, Khar, Dushan and Trishira; deformed / mutilated Supernakha, killed Kabandh and subjugating the proud Bali, made Sugriv the king of Kiskindhya (2). Then accepting Vibhishan, who had come to seek his refuge and protection, he had destroyed Ravana along with his kinsmen, thereby liberated the Gods of Ravana's fear and proved his fame as 'the liberated and protector' (3).'

This news spread like wildfire and the citizens ran happily, exhilarated and joyous like a peacock is when it hears the rumbling of rain-bearing dark clouds, or a drowning man finding the sea-shore (4).

'Today is the last day of exile', they said, and almost as on cue, the plane appeared over the sky near the city. Disembarking from it, Lord Ram and Laxman bowed their heads to their guru Vashistha and other Brahmins (5).

Lord Ram met all according to their standing and status and filled their heart with joy¹. Then he met Bharat, Shatrughan and mothers. Tulsidas finds no words to describe the flood of emotions, love, affections and unfathomable joy that flowed at that moment (6).

The community of saints, sages and holy men immediately made arrangement for Lord Ram's coronation. Tulsidas also sings the song of Lord Ram's glories and praises him according to his ability (7). [6/21].

[Note—¹Here, 'standing and status' not only means the hierarchical position of a particular person in society, but also the level of his love and devotion for the Lord as well as the depth of sorrow on separation from Lord Ram. However, the point to note is that the Lord met everyone, and he did not discriminate between them based on their caste or clan.]

Geetawali: Raag Jaitsree: Verse no. 6/22—

रन जीति राम राउ आए ।
 सानुज सदल ससीय कुसल आजु, अवध आनंद-बधाए ।।1
 अरिपुर जारि, उजारि, मारि रिपु, बिबुध सुबास बसाए ।
 धरनि-धेनु, महिदेव-साधु, सबके सब सोच नसाए ।।2
 दई लंक, थिर थपे बिभीषन, बचन-पियूष पिआए ।
 सुधा सींचि कपि, कृपा नगर-नर-नारि निहारि जिआए ।।3
 मिलि गुर, बंधु, मातु, जन, परिजन, भए सकल मन भाए ।
 दरस-हरस दसचारि बरस के दुख पल में बिसराए ।।4
 बोलि सचिव सुचि, सोधि सुदिन, मुनि-मंगल साज सजाए ।
 महाराज-अभिषेक बरषि सुर सुमन निसान बजाए ।।5
 लै लै भेंट नृप-अहिप-लोकपति अति सनेह सिर नाए ।
 पूजि, प्रीति पहिचानि राम आदरे अधिक, अपनाए ।।6

दान मान सनमानि जानि रुचि, जाचक जन पहिराए ।
 गए सोक-सर सूखि, मोद-सरिता-समुद्र गहिराए ॥7
 प्रभु-प्रताप रबि अहित-अमंगल-अघ-उलूक-तम ताए ।
 किये बिसोक हित-कोक-कोकनद लोक सुजस सुभ छाए ॥8
 रामराज कुलकाज सुमंगल, सबनि सबै सुख पाए ।
 देहिं असीस भूमिसुर प्रमुदित, प्रजा प्रमोद बढ़ाए ॥9
 आस्रम-धरम-बिभाग बेदपथ पावन लोग चलाए ।
 धरम-निरत, सिय-राम-चरन-रत, मनहु राम-सिय-जाए ॥10
 कामधेनु महि, बिटप कामतरु, कोउ बिधि बाम न लाये ।
 ते तब, अब तुलसी तेउ जिन्ह हित सहित राम-गुन गाये ॥11 [6/22]

Verse no. 6/22—King Ram has returned to Ayodhya after being victorious in the war, accompanied by his brother, army and Sita. That is why there are celebrations in Ayodhya (1). He (Lord Ram) has laid to waste and burnt to the ground the enemies' city (Lanka), thereby re-habilitating the Gods; all the distress and agonies of earth, cows (deemed to be holy), Brahmins (the wise ones) and Sadhus (Pure hearted ones) have been dispelled (2). He has given the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan, installing him as a permanent king of that place, and after reviving the dead monkeys (in the battle-field) by the rain of life-giving divine nectar (Amrit), he has come and given new-life, as it were, by glancing mercifully at the men and women of Ayodhya (3). Guru (Vashistha) brothers (Bharat, Shatrughan), mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi), servants and kinsman met Lord Ram and all their wishes were fulfilled—they forgot the sufferings of fourteen years separation on seeing their Lord once again (4).

Sage Vashistha summoned pure-minded Sumantra and other ministers, and ordered them to find out an auspicious day and time, and collect all holy and pure materials required for the coronation ceremony. At the time of Lord Ram's coronation, Gods showered flowers and sounded trumpets and other musical instruments (5). All the invited and assembled kings, knights, land-lords and lok-patis (a title similar to a king) offered various gifts on the occasion, and bowed their heads. Lord Ram gave them full due respect, and accepted their offerings (6).

Then he donated liberally and respectfully to alms-seekers according to their wishes and desires, satisfying them to the full. This dried up their pond of distress, as it were, (i.e. all their wants and poverty were removed) and the river and ocean of happiness became deep (i.e. they became deeply contented) (7).

The owl of sins and darkness, malevolence and un-holiness, disappeared. The Chakva-Chakvi (a pair of birds symbolising pure quality of love) and the Lotus (symbolising pureness and detachment) became free of distress. The fame of Lord Ram spread throughout the world (8).

In the reign of Lord Ram, the entire world remained holy and incorrupt. All the living beings enjoyed all possible types of happiness and comfort. And the Brahmins used to give their blessings for the prosperity of the citizens (9).

Lord Ram divided the society according to the sanctions of the Vedas into various 'Ashrams'¹ (segments of life), and made the people follow this sanctified way of life. All

the people were righteous and noble in their conduct as if they were all born from Lord Ram himself (10).

The earth became like the mythical Kamdhenu cow (i.e. the earth provided all the necessities of life and there was an abundance of everything), and the trees were like the mythical Kalpa Tree (the all wishful-filling tree of the Gods). The creator was benevolent towards all.

Tulsidas says this was (with respect to stanza nos. 7-10) true not only then, but even today—all those who devote themselves selflessly to Lord Ram, get the same happiness as that prevailed in the time of Lord Ram himself (11). [6/22].

[Note—¹There are four Ashrams in Hindu society. The life of a Hindu man is divided into four segments or sections of roughly twenty-five years each. These are called the 'Ashrams'. They are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.]

Geetawali: Raag Todi: Verse no. 6/23—

आजु अवध आनंद-बधावन, रिपु रन जीति राम आए।
 सजि सुबिमान निसान बजावत मुदित देव देखन धाए॥ 1॥
 घर-घर चारु चौक, चंदन-मनि, मंगल-कलस सबनि साजे।
 ध्वज-पताक, तोरन, बितानबर, बिबिध भाँति बाजन बाजे॥ 2॥
 राम-तिलक सुनि दीप दीपके नृप आए उपहार लिये।
 सीयसहित आसीन सिंहासन निरखि जोहारत हरष हिये॥ 3॥

मंगलगान, बेदधुनि, जयधुनि, मुनि-असीस-धुनि भुवन भरे।
 बरषि सुमन सुर-सिद्ध प्रसंसत, सबके सब संताप हरे॥ 4॥
 राम-राज भइ कामधेनु महि, सुख संपदा लोक छाए।
 जनम जनम जानकीनाथके गुनगन तुलसिदास गाये॥ 5॥

Verse no. 6/23—The great King Lord Sri Ram has won victory over the enemy and has come back. This is why there is rejoicing, merriment, festivities and celebrations in Ayodhya. The Gods have colourfully decorated their beautiful aerial vehicles, and playing their musical instruments cheerfully, they are rushing forward, happily, cheerfully and full of exhilaration, to see him (Sri Ram) (1).

In every household of the city, attractive ritualistic designs shaped like squares and rectangles have been painted on the ground with a paste made out of sandal-wood, and these have been decorated with gems to enhance their beauty. Everyone has put up auspicious and colourful flags, banners, buntings, arches and other celebratory paraphernalia, while various types of musical instruments are being played here and there, everywhere. in the city (2).

Hearing about the coronation of Sri Ram, kings and knights from far-off and nearby continents and islands have come, carrying with them gifts for the Lord. Seeing him (Sri Ram) on throne alongside Sita, they pay their respects to him in a most delightful and cheerful manner. All of them are exhilarated in their hearts as seeing the Lord on the throne (of Ayodhya) (3).

All the abodes of the city, and by extension, all the corners of the realm and the world, are reverberating with auspicious and delightful songs, chanting of the Vedic hymns, and the applause and blessings of sages, hermits and seers. The Gods and Siddhas (mystics, those who possess special powers) shower flowers and praise the Lord. The Lord, on the other hand, has removed all the sorrows and miseries of everyone. [Lord Ram ensured that everyone was happy and contented. No sorrow or grief of any kind was allowed to survive in Ayodhya once the Lord ascended the throne.] (4).

The earth has become like a Kamdhenu cow (i.e. it gives all the desired yields in the form of crops, fruits, flowers, rainfall, minerals, gems, wealth and prosperity) in the reign of Sri Ram, and happiness and prosperity has spread over all the Lokas (worlds). Tulsidas says that he has been singing the glories, the virtues, the great fame and the great deeds of the Lord of Sita (i.e. Sri Ram) in all the births he has taken (5). [6/23]”

Tulsidas’ “Ram Agya Prashnaawali”, verse no. 6/6/1—

जय धुनि गान निसान सुर बरषत सुरतरु फूल ।
 भए राम राजा अवध, सगुन सुमंगल मूल ॥ [रामायज्ञा प्रश्न 6/3/1]

“The Gods are singing the glories of Lord Ram, are playing various musical instruments and showering flowers of the celestial Kalpa Tree (eternal tree). This is a very auspicious occasion because Lord Ram has become the King of Ayodhya.”

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Chapter 10

Lava-Kush Kand:

Sita's Exile and birth of Lord Ram's two sons Lava and Kush.

{The story of Sita's exile and the birth of her two sons Lav and Kush have not been included by Tulsidas in his epic 'Ram Charit Manas', but he has dealt with it in 'Geetawali', Uttar Kand, verse nos. 7/25 to 7/36. So for our narration we shall quote the relevant verses from Geetawali to complete our story of Lord Ram. The verses are hereby quoted in verbatim.}

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/25—

संकट—सुकृतको सोचत जानि जिय रघुराउ ।
 सहस द्वादस पंचसतमें कछुक है अब आउ ॥ 1 ॥
 भोग पुनि पितु—आयुको, सोउ किए बनै बनाउ ।
 परिहरे बिनु जानकी नहि और अनघ उपाउ ॥ 2 ॥
 पालिबे असिधार—ब्रत, प्रिय प्रेम—पाल सुभाउ ।
 होइ हित केहि भाँति, नित सुबिचारु, नहि चित चाउ ॥ 3 ॥
 निपट असमंजसहु बिलसति मुख मनोहरताउ ।
 परम धीर—धुरीन हृदय कि हरष—बिसमय काउ ? ॥ 4 ॥
 अनुज—सेवक—सचिव हैं सब सुमति, साध सखाउ ।
 जान कोउ न जानकी बिनु अगम अलख लखाउ ॥ 5 ॥
 राम जोगवत सीय—मनु, प्रिय—मनहि प्रानप्रियाउ ।
 परम पावन प्रेम—परमिति समुझि तुलसी गाउ ॥ 6 ॥ [7/25]

Verse no. 7/25—Once, Lord Ram became contemplative and wondered, 'Why, out of the total of 12500 yrs. of my life span in this world (on earth), only a few years are left (1). After that it is providence that I must live the remaining part of my father's life, but to do that I will have to leave Sita as no other innocent and righteous way out of this quandary is available.

[King Dasrath had died even before his full time of life on this earth was completed. Hence, Lord Ram had to complete the gap by living his father's left-over time himself—because as the eldest son he had the full moral responsibilities to fulfill all religious obligations of his late father if he had been alive. But to live with Sita during this period, which he would be living on behalf of his late father Dasrath, would be highly unethical and unrighteous. There being no way out, the only solution was to leave her or abandon her.] (2).

Now, the dilemma was either to live a harsh life and face the facts, or to uphold the duty and love towards his beloved wife. In such a situation, he began brooding, became pensive, lost in deep thoughts and contemplative. Faced with such uncertainties, the Lord was perplexed, not knowing what to do.

[The reason for his dilemma is that Sita had not committed any mistake, and so it will be very wrong to abandon her as punishment for no crime of hers. But then to live with her when he would be playing the role of his late father would be equally sinful because that would be tantamount to living with one's daughter-in-law. It's unthinkable. So, Lord Ram was undecided.] (3).

But, even in such uncertainties, Lord Ram's face glowed because it is not possible to have either happiness and joy or dejection and gloom in the heart of Ram who was an expert in the grand virtues of fortitude, equanimity, tranquility and self-control (4). No one except Sita could realise the dilemma faced by the Lord—not even his brothers, servants, ministers and friends (5). Because both Lord Ram and Sita know and understand each other's sentiments and thoughts very closely.

Tulsidas also sings the glory of this most pure devotion of Sri Ram and Sita towards each other (6). [7/25]

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/26—

राम बिचारि कै राखी ठीक दै मन माहिं ।
 लोक—बेद—सनेह पालत पल कृपालहि जाहिं ॥ 1 ॥
 प्रियतमा, पति देवता, जिहि उमा रमा सिहाहिं ।
 गुरुविनि सुकुमारि सिय तियमनि समुझि सकुचाहिं ॥ 2 ॥
 मेरे ही सुख सुखी, सुख अपनो सपनहूँ नाहिं ।
 गेहिनी—गुन—गेहिनी गुन सुमिरि सोच समाहिं ॥ 3 ॥
 राम—सीय—सनेह बरनत अगम सुकबि सकाहिं ।
 रामसीय—रहस्य तुलसी कहत राम—कृपाहिं ॥ 4 ॥ [7/26]

Verse no. 7/26—At last, after considerable thought, Lord Ram decided to abandon Sita and snap all relationships with her (permanently). Lord Ram spent each moment of his life loving and showing affection to Sita in accordance with the sanctions of Vedas and customs of the world (1).

'Sita is most dear to me; even Parvati (consort of Shiva) and Laxmi (consort of Vishnu) are jealous of her faithfulness and integrity. At the moment she is pregnant, and is like a jewel amongst women.' Thinking this, Lord Ram became exceptionally hesitant and reluctant to abandon her (2).

'Sita's happiness lies in my happiness,' thinking this, Lord Ram becomes virtually drowned in a sea of worries and grief at the prospect of having to leave her inspite of knowing fully well that she is faultless and immaculate (3). Even accomplished poets find themselves inapt to describe the love of Lord Ram and Sita. It is only as a result of Lord Ram's blessing that Tulsidas is able to sing their glories (4). [7/26]

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/27—

चरचा चरनिसों चरची जानमनि रघुराइ ।
 दूत-मुख सुनि लोक-धुनि घर घरनि बूझी आइ ॥1
 प्रिया निज अभिलाष रुचि कहि कहति सिय सकुचाइ ।
 तीय-तनयसमेत तापस पूजिहों बन जाइ ॥2
 जानि करुनासिंधु भाबी-बिबस सकल सहाइ ।
 धीर धरि रघुबीर भोरहि लिए लषन बोलाइ ॥3
 'तात तुरतहि साज स्यंदन सीय लेहु चढ़ाइ ।
 बालमीकि मुनीस आश्रम आइयहु पहुँचाइ' ॥4
 'भलेहि नाथ', सुहाथ माथे राखि राम-रजाइ ।
 चले तुलसी पालि सेवक-धरम अवधि अघाइ ॥5 [7/27]

Verse no. 7/27—The most wise and clever Lord Ram discussed with his royal spies the secret news they have brought about the kingdom. Hearing from them the opinion of the subjects of the kingdom, Lord Ram went to his palace and asked Sita—(i) 'My beloved! What is your desire?' Then Sita replied hesitantly, 'I want to go to the forest and worship (i.e. serve) the sages, their wives and children!' (2).

[In the context of what has been already said in the preceding verses, it clearly indicates that Sita had been briefed by the Lord of what he would be forced to do. And since the Lord's happiness and carrying out his wishes was the primary concern and duty of Sita as a devoted and loyal wife, she took the initiative of telling him that she wishes to go to the forest to serve the sages and hermits living there so that her husband is excused from the embarrassment of forcefully sending his wife—who is not an ordinary wife but a Queen of an Empire—into the forest for exile. That would have been a very sticky situation. So she decided to free the Lord of this single guilt, and volunteered to go to the forest herself.]

Then, realising what was ordained by providence, the most merciful Lord Ram called Laxman at the crack of dawn (3) and said, 'Brother, get a chariot ready immediately, and take Sita on it and drop her at the hermitage of Valmiki (i.e. take Sita to the hermitage of sage Valmiki, and put her in his care before you return).' (4).

Then, although Laxman said 'Oh Lord, its okay (I'll follow your orders),' he clasped his head with his hands as if lamenting with sorrow and feeling extremely guilty of the outcome of what he was ordered to do. Fully carrying out the duties as an obedient follower of the Lord (without questioning the probity of the master's orders), Laxman proceeded from there (to bring the chariot and take Sita away to the forest) (5). [7/27].

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/28—

आइ लषन लै सौंपी सिय मुनीसहि आनि ।
 नाइ सिर रहे पाइ आसिष जोरि पंकजपानि ॥1

बालमीकि बिलोकि ब्याकुल लषन गरत गलानि ।
 सरबबिद बूझत न, बिधिकी वामता पहिचानि ॥2
 जानि जिय अनुमानही सिय सहस बिधि सनमानि ।
 राम सद्गुन-धाम, परमिति भई कछुक मलानि ॥3
 दीनबंधु दयालु देवर देखि अति अकुलानि ।
 कहति बचन उदास तुलसीदास त्रिभुवन-रानि ॥4 [7/28]

Verse no. 7/28—Then Laxman brought Sita to the hermitage of sage Valmiki, bowed his head before the sage and stood still with folded hands (1). Seeing Laxman full of regret, contrite and uneasy, Valmiki did not ask him any questions (realising that something was seriously amiss) (2).

The sage could guess, by virtue of his sixth sense of perception and wisdom, what might have happened, and he therefore welcomed Sita with immense respect and affection (as if his own daughter has arrived in his care).

But wondering how Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of all righteousness and virtues, could take such an extreme step to abandon his most faithful and highly virtuous wife, the sage became slightly gloomy, dejected and distressed (3).

Tulsidas says that Sita, who was the queen of the three worlds, became full of sorrows, and she said to Laxman, who was her brother-in-law and most merciful and friend of distressed, as follows:- (4) [7/28].

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/29—

तौलों बलि, आपुही कीबी बिनय समुझि सुधारि ।
 जौलों हौं सिखि लेऊं बन रिषि-रीति बसि दिन चारि ॥1
 तापसी कहि कहा पठवति नृपनिको मनुहारि ।
 बहुरि तिहि बिधि आइ कहिहै साधु कोउ हितकारि ॥2
 लषनलाल कृपाल ! निपटहिं डारिबी न बिसारि ।
 पालबी सब तापसनि ज्यौं राजधरम बिचारि ॥3
 सुनत सीता-बचन मोचत सकल लोचन-बारि ।
 बालमीकि न सके तुलसी सो सनेह सँभारि ॥4 [7/29]

Verse no. 7/29— [Sita said—] ‘Pray Laxman! Pray to the Gods for my well-being till I become adapted to and learn the way of living in a hermitage in another 4-5 days (1). Being a hermitress, what message can I give which is suitable for a king (Lord Ram)! I believe that (like someone had cast aspersion on my character and forced Lord Ram to abandon me¹) someone else would also come and say some good things about me to the Lord (so that the scar made on my character would be washed away some day, I hope) (2).

‘Oh merciful Laxman! Do not forget me suddenly, but like other ladies who stay in the various hermitages in your realm, do look after me (take care of me like any other hermitress, though without showing any special privilege).²’ (3).

Tulsidas says that all those present on the occasion started weeping on hearing these pitiful words of Sita (4). [7/29]

[Note—¹One washer-man had some dispute with his wife and wished to throw her out of the house. In the course of heated argument with her he rebuked her by saying—‘I am not Ram who would consent to accept you as my wife once it is established that you had been in the house of another man.’ When the spy reported this to Lord Ram, he thought that the proper thing would be to abandon Sita in order to uphold the laws of righteousness, propriety and probity which he expects his subjects to follow. Of course it was inappropriate to keep a woman as a wife if she had loose character. This was only an excuse that the Lord was waiting for, because the decision to leave Sita and the reason behind it is already discussed above.

²Ram was an Emperor and King. It was a standard practice for the king to provide for the necessities of life to all the hermits and sages living within the boundary of the kingdom. What Sita means that she should not be shown any special favour because she happens to an erst-while queen of Ayodhya. She should be treated at par with other hermitresses of the kingdom.]

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/30—

सुनि ब्याकुल भए, उतरु कछु कह्यो न जाइ।
जानि जिय बिधि बाम दीन्हों मोहि सरुष सजाइ॥ 1॥
कहत हिय मेरी कठिनई लखि गई प्रीति लजाइ।
आजु अवसर ऐसेहू जौं न चले प्रान बजाइ॥ 2॥
इतहि सीय-सनेह-संकट उत्तहि राम-रजाइ।
मौनही गहि चरन, गौने सिख-सुआसिष पाइ॥ 3॥
प्रेम-निधि पितुको कहे मैं परुष बचन अघाइ।
पाप तेहि परिताप तुलसी उचित सहे सिराइ॥ 4॥ [7/30]

Verse no. 7/30—Hearing the anguished and mournful words of Sita, Laxman became highly and emotionally tormented and agitated; he could not say anything. He realised in his heart that the malicious creator has punished him viciously with great wrath (1).

He thought to himself, ‘Alas! Even ‘disaffection’ would feel shy and ashamed at seeing my stern and emotionless heart, for my life has not departed from my body inspite of such a woeful sight.’ (2).

(He was on the horns of a great dilemma). On the one hand, he was tied to Sita's (son-like) affections for him, and on the other hand there were the orders of Sri Ram. [He could not decide what to do. It was a Herculean task to leave Sita alone in a forest because she loved Laxman like her own son, while Sri Ram had clearly instructed him to go and leave her there, and then come back to Ayodhya.] In the end, he silently touched Sita's feet, got her blessings and advice, and exited from there with a heavy heart (to come back to Ayodhya) (3).

(He lamented—) ‘I had said most acrimonious and harsh words in abundance for my father who was full of love and affections for me. It is that sin which has rewarded me with this insurmountable sorrow and anguish, and it can be overcome (or alleviated, mitigated) only by tolerating it (with forbearance, fortitude and courage) (4).’ [7/30].

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/31—

गौने मौनही बारहि बार परि परि पाय।
जात जनु रथ चीर कर लछिमन मगन पछिताय॥ 1॥
असन बिनु बन, बरम बिनु रन, बच्यौ कठिन कुघाय।
दुसह सौंसति सहनको हनुमान ज्यायो जाय॥ 2॥
हेतु हौं सियहरनको तब, अबहु भयो सहाय।
होत हठि मोहि दाहिनो दिन दैव दारुन दाय॥ 3॥
तज्यो तनु संग्राम जेहि लागि गीध जसी जटाय।
ताहि हौं पहुँचाइ कानन चल्थो अवध सुभाय॥ 4॥
घोरहृदय कठोर—करतब सृज्यो हौं बिधि बायँ।
दास तुलसी जानि राख्यो कृपानिधि रघुराय॥ 5॥ [7/31]

Verse no. 7/31—Once again, he repeatedly fell at her (Sita's) feet, and then left the place silently. He was submerged in remorse and so full of contrition and lamentation that he looked like a mere effigy (i.e. lifeless) wrapped in clothes while sitting on the chariot (on the way back to Ayodhya) (1).

[He was full of remorse, contrition and lamented thoughtfully to himself—] ‘Alas! I lived without food in the forest (during 14 year exile), and nothing (no harm) happened to me in the battle-field even though I had no armour to protect my body. Even when I was struck by the ‘Shakti’ (a especially powerful arrow shot at him by Meghnad), I survived—Hanuman had brought the medicine to revive me. But now I regret it. [That is, it would have been better if I had died then because I would not have had to face this most unpleasant and ignominious task of abandoning Sita in the forest that I am being forced to do now. Why did I survive?] (2).

I was the cause for Sita's abduction (or rather, it was my negligence or anger at Sita's provocative words that I left her alone so that Ravana could abduct her). And today, I have become instrumental in sending her to exile. Oh creator! Even my favourable time was forced to convert itself into your vicious wrath. [This is why, though I've always stuck to righteousness and had staunchly followed every word of Lord Sri Ram, I've been made a scapegoat and most ignominious at being instrumental in all the horrific torments that Sita has had to undergo in her life. First she was abducted by Ravana because I left her alone in the hermitage when Lord Ram had gone behind the golden deer, and now it is me who has to leave her alone in the forest. Oh God, what sin did I commit that you had chosen me to be instrument that causes all the problems of Sita? Why are you making me an escape-goat for the purpose of fulfilling your own plan?] (3).

Alas! The most glorious Jatau (the vulture) had left his mortal coil (i.e. had died) in the battle-field trying to free Sita (from the clutches of Ravana), and here I am, putting her to exile in the forest voluntarily, and as is my wont (i.e. as I've always been doing), I am returning to Ayodhya empty-handed (4).

It appears that the stern and malicious creator has created me to do all the detestable, ignoble, repulsive, reprehensible and infamous deeds (and that is why he has made me so stern-hearted so that I can do it). Perhaps also, Sri Ram knows this secret (and hence he chose me to carry out such orders. Why, couldn't he have sent Bharat or Shatrughan to do this dirty and most ignoble job; why did he select me?) (5).' [7/31].

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/32—

पुत्रि ! न सोचिए आई हौं जनक-गृह जिय जानि ।
 कालिही कल्यान-कौतुक, कुसल तव, कल्यानि ॥1
 राजरिषि पितु-ससुर, प्रभु पति, तू सुसंगलखानि ।
 ऐसेहू थल बामता, बड़ि बाम बिधि की बानि ॥2
 बोलि मुनि कन्या सिखाई प्रीति-गति पहिचानि ।
 आलसिन्हकी देवसरि सिय सेइयहु मन मानि ॥3
 न्हाइ प्रातहि पूजिबो बट बिटप अभिमत-दानि ।
 सुवन-लाहु उछाहु दिन दिन, देबि, अनहित-हानि ॥4
 पाप-ताप-बिमोचनी कहि कथा सरस पुरानि ।
 बालमीकि प्रबोधि तुलसी गई गरुड़ गलानि ॥5 [7/32]

Verse no. 7/32—Sage Valmiki welcomed Sita with the warmth of a father and reassured her, saying, 'Daughter! Think that you have arrived at your father's place, and stop lamenting and worrying at all for any kind of thing. You will soon get happiness (1). Both your father and father-in-law are the most exalted among kings, the Supreme Lord himself is your husband, and you yourself are a mine of all virtues—seeing you in distress, one marvels at the deceptively uncertain and stern nature of Vidhata (the creator).' (2).

Then, Valmiki called Sita and advised her as he would have done to his own daughter, 'Oh Sita! Serve the holy river Ganges which gives salvation to even lazy people (because it is believed that by taking a dip in the holy water, a person absolves himself of all sins which would have otherwise needed lots of penances, fire-sacrifices, rituals, etc.). In the morning, after taking your bath, worship the Vat-Tree (Banyan Tree). Oh Goddess! You'll be blessed with sons by doing so. You shall find greater encouragement with the passage of time, and all your malign stars would abet gradually.' (4).

Tulsidas says after that Valmiki consoled her and kept her mind diverted from her sorrows by narrating many thoughtful, inspiring and interesting stories. This resulted in alleviating Sita's distress a great deal (5). [7/32]

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/33—

जबतें जानकी रही रुचिर आस्रम आइ ।
 गगन, जल, थल बिमल तबतें, सकल मंगलदाइ ॥ 1 ॥
 निरस भूरुह सरस फूलत, फलत अति अधिकाइ ।
 कंद—मूल, अनेक अंकुर स्वाद सुधा लजाइ ॥ 2 ॥
 मलय मरुत, मराल—मधुकर—मोर—पिक—समुदाइ ।
 मुदित—मन मृग—बिहग बिहरत बिषम बैर बिहाइ ॥ 3 ॥
 रहत रबि अनुकूल दिन, ससि रजनि सजनि सुहाइ ।
 सीय सुनि सादर सराहति सखिन्ह भलो मनाइ ॥ 4 ॥
 मोद बिपिन बिनोद चितवत लेत चितहि चोराइ ।
 राम बिनु सिय सुखद बन, तुलसी कहै किमि गाइ ॥ 5 ॥ [7/33]

Verse no. 7/33—Ever since Sita has made her dwelling at sage Valmiki's hermitage, the sky, water and earth—all have become clear and bestow (provide) all types of auspiciousness, well-being and welfare (1).

Dried trees have become green and are laden (blossoming, blooming) with large quantities of sweet and succulent flowers and fruits, while different varieties of edible roots, stems and sprouts put to shame even Amrit (the sweet elixir of life) by their taste (2).

Fragrant breeze, swans/goose, black/bumble-bees, peacocks and cuckoos in their multitudes, as well as happy deer (animals) and birds of all varieties have all abandoned their inherent mutual animosities, and instead they roam about the place playfully and in a friendly manner (3).

The sun is favourable during the day time (i.e. it is never too hot), while the moon looks pleasing and appealing to the women during the night. When Sita hears all this from her companions (i.e. the other ladies residing in the hermitage as well as the surrounding villages and hamlets, and other forest-dwelling tribal women), she becomes delighted and praise them (4).

The forest is so exuberant with joyous, delightful and happy tidings that are full of auspiciousness that it seems to steal (enchant, captivate, enthrall, enrapture) the mind. But is the forest joyful and a provider of peace and comfort for Sita without Sri Ram? This is a question that cannot be answered by Tulsidas (i.e. it is doubtful). [How can Tulsidas say that Sita is happy and enjoying her days in the forest without Sri Ram, though the pleasant surroundings have made her stay as comfortable as they could possibly can. Internally she is being burnt by the fire and agony of separation. But at the same time, she is happy that she obeyed the Lord and helps him to carry out the divine mandate of the creator like a faithful and loyal wife should be doing even if she had stayed in the palace with him.] (5). [7/33].

Birth & Naming of Lav & Kush: Geetawali: Verse no. 7/34—

सुभ दिन, सुभ घरी, नीको नखत, लगन सुहाइ ।
 पूत जाये जानकी द्वै, मुनिबधू उठीं गाइ ॥1
 हरषि बरषत सुमन सुर गहगहे बधाए बजाइ ।
 भुवन, कानन, आस्रमनि रहे मोद-मंगल छाइ ॥2
 तेहि निसा तहँ सनुसूदन रहे बिधिवस आइ ।
 माँगि मुनिसों बिदा गवने भोर सो सुख पाइ ॥3
 मातु-मौसी-बहिनिहूतें, सासुतें अधिकाइ ।
 करहिं तापस-तीय-तनया सीय-हित चित लाइ ॥4
 किए बिधि-व्यवहार मुनिबर बिप्रबुंद बोलाइ ।
 कहत सब, रिषिकृपाको फल भयो आजु अघाइ ॥5
 सुरुष ऋषि, सुख सुतनिको, सिय-सुखद सकल सहाइ ।
 सूल राम-सनेहको तुलसी न जियतें जाइ ॥6 [7/34]

Verse no. 7/34—Sri Janki (Sita) gave birth to two sons on an auspicious day, auspicious time, and auspicious celestial configuration of stars and planets (Nakshatra and Lagna). The wives of hermits began to sing carols at that moment (1). The Gods, being extremely joyous, played their musical instruments and showered flowers, and happiness spread over the entire world, forest and hermitages (2).

By chance, Shatrughan came to that hermitage that night for a halt (during his regular journey through the different areas of the kingdom). Having seen the happy event, he took leave of the sage Valmiki and left (3). The wives and daughters of the hermits served Sita with more dedication and attention than her own mother, aunt, mother-in-law and sisters would have done (4).

Sage Valmiki called all the Brahmins (hermits and sages), and honoured them all according to the present situation (like Sita's own father and father-in-law would have done). All said that the blessings of the sage Valmiki have taken a personified form (in the form of two beautiful sons of Lord Ram) (5).

Tulsidas says that although Sita gets all affection and love from the (fatherly) sage Valmiki and two adorable sons (Lav-Kush), she is unable to remove the thorn of Lord Ram's separation from her heart (6). [7/34].

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/35—

मुनिबर करि छठी कीन्हीं बारहेंकी रीति ।
 बन-बसन पहिराइ तापस, तोषि पोषे प्रीति ॥1
 नामकरन सुअन्नप्रासन बेद बाँधी नीति ।
 समय सब रिषिराज करत समाज साज समीति ॥2
 बाल लालहिं, कहहिं 'करिहैं राज सब जग जीति' ।
 राम-सिय-सुत, गुर-अनुग्रह, उचित, अचल प्रतीति ॥3
 निरखि बाल-बिनोद तुलसी जात बासर बीति ।
 पिय-चरित सिय-चित-चितेरो लिखत नित हित-भीति ॥4 [7/35]

Verse no. 7/35—Sage Valmiki performed the children's Chatti ceremony (rites on the 6th day of birth) and Barahi ceremony (rites on the 12th day of birth)*. He adorned the assembled hermits and sages with suitable hermit-like clothes (robes), and satisfied them affectionately (1).

[*In Chatti, some sweet dish, generally a milk-rice pudding is made and distributed among all the near and dear ones as a mark of celebration; in Barahi, almost a similar ritual is repeated, with some extra snacks thrown-in for good measure; also some religious books/scriptures are recited to invoke the Gods to bless the child].

Sage Valmiki did all the various rites as sanctioned by the Vedas for a child from time to time after calling the community (of sages, hermits, saints) and making due preparations for it (2).

While playing with the children, he used to say, 'They will indeed rule over the whole world.' These two children are, first, the sons of Lord Ram, and second, are bestowed with the sage's blessings. Therefore it was right and expected of them that they would become as famous as their exalted father Lord Ram, and everyone believed so (3).

Tulsidas says, 'Sita's days were passed watching pranks and playful gestures and activities of the children, but internally the mind as a painter continued to paint the story of Lord Ram on the stone of love and affection in the heart of Sita (4).' [7/35].

Geetawali: Verse no. 7/36—

बालक सीय के बिहरत मुदित-मन दोउ भाइ ।
 नाम लव-कुस राम-सिय अनुहरति सुंदरताइ ॥1
 देत मुनि मुनि-सिसु खेलौना, ते लै धरत दुराइ ।
 खेल खेलत नृप-सिसुन्हके बालबुंद बोलाइ ॥2
 भूप-भूषन-बसन-बाहन, राज-साज सजाइ ।
 बरम-चरम, कृपान-सर, धनु-तून लेत बनाइ ॥3
 दुखी सिय पिय-बिरह तुलसी, सुखी सुत-सुख पाइ ।
 आँच पय उफनात सींचत सलिल ज्यों सकुचाइ ॥4 [7/36]

Verse no. 7/36—Sita's two sons move about the forest playing happily. Their names are Lav and Kush. They are as handsome, magnificent and lovely as Sri Ram and Sita (1). When sage Valmiki gave them toys suitable for hermitage boys, they playfully hide them; they join many boys and play the games played by princes (2). They create King-like ornaments, clothes, vehicles and other royal paraphernalia, besides arms such as shield, body-armour, sword, arrows, bows and quiver (3).

Tulsidas says, 'Sita is extremely contrite, sorrowful and distraught at the separation from her husband (Lord Ram), but at the same time her agonies are somewhat alleviated and overcome when she sees the two lovely sons (of Lord Ram) staying with her. She derives some semblance of comfort, peace and solace from this fact much like a sprinkle of water helps the froth heaving and spilling over from boiling milk to subside. [When her heart is about to boil over with sorrow and pain of separation, the sight of the two children gives her peace, emotional support, solace and courage.] (4). [7/36]'

In Valmiki Ramayan, 7/66/1-8, details of the Birth and Naming of Ram's two sons appear as follows:-

यामेव रात्रिं शत्रुघ्नः पर्णशालां समाविशत् ॥ तामेव रात्रिं सीतापि प्रसूता दारकद्वयम् ॥१॥ ततोऽर्धरात्रसमये बालका मुनिदारकाः ॥ बाल्मीकेः प्रियमाचख्युः सीतायाः प्रसवं शुभम् ॥२॥ भगवन रामपत्नी सा प्रसूता दारकद्वयम् ॥ ततो रक्षां महातेजः कुरु भूतविनाशिनीम् ॥३॥ तेषां तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा महर्षिः समुपागमत् ॥ बालचन्द्रप्रतीकाशौ देवपुत्रौ महौजसौ ॥४॥ जगाम तत्र हृष्टात्मा ददर्श च कुमारकौ ॥ भूतघ्नीं चाकरोत्ताभ्यां रक्षां रक्षोविनाशिनीम् ॥५॥ कुशमुष्टिमुपादाय लवं चैव तु स द्विजः ॥ वाल्मीकिः प्रददौ ताभ्यां रक्षां भूतविनाशिनीम् ॥६॥ यस्तयोः पूर्वजो जातः स कुशैर्मत्रसत्कृतैः ॥ निर्मार्जनीयस्तु तदा कुश इत्यस्य नाम तत् ॥७॥ यश्चावरो भवेत्ताभ्यां लवेन सुसमाहितः ॥ निर्मार्जनीयो वृद्धाभिलषेति च स नामतः ॥८॥ [Valmiki Ramayan, 7/66/1-8.]

“Sita gave birth to two sons during the night when Shatrughan stayed in the hermitage in a thatched hut (1). The disciples of the sage came at mid night and informed Valmiki of the birth of the 2 sons (2), ‘Oh Lord, Lord Ram's wife has given birth to 2 sons, please bless them and protect them (3).’

Hearing their words, Valmiki started for the place where the children were born (4), saw the 2 moon like beautiful sons and protected them against evil spirits by casting a charm (5).

Then he took a fistful of Kush grass (a reed) and divided the tuft into two halves from the middle (6). The son, who was sprinkled by sanctified water (baptized) first, using the upper half of the Kush grass, was called Kush (7). The other son, who was blessed (baptized) by the lower, root bearing part of Kush grass was called Lav (Lav = root) (8). [Valmiki Ramayan, 7/66/1-8]

[Note—¹Traditionally, Lav is regarded as the elder son while Kush as the younger son—for the simple reason that Lav's name comes first. But careful analysis of Valmiki's Ramayan as narrated above shows that Kush was baptised first and Lav after him. Valmiki could not have committed such a glaring error of baptising the younger son first instead of the elder. Though Lav was born (emerged into this world from his mother's womb) prior to Kush, the actual conception was in the reverse order. And sage Valmiki who was an expert, wise and enlightened person could understand the intricate biological phenomenon involved and decided to baptise Kush first, making him the biologically elder brother. But traditionally and customarily, Lav was regarded as the elder brother.

²From the moment the thought that now he has to live his father's role till the time he disclosed this to Sita that it is in-appropriate that she stay with him any longer, Lord Ram spent each moment showing love and affections to Sita as per the sanctions of Vedas and customs of the society (Geetawali 7/26/1) because 'Sri Ram and Sita understood each other well and their most pure love is being sung by Tulsidas within sanctioned limits of 'Maryada' (decorum, sanctioned code of propriety, etiquette)' [7/25/6].

Thereafter, Lord Ram was hesitant to abandon her because she was pregnant [7/26/2]. This, coupled with the fact that Valmiki reassured Sita on her arrival at

his hermitage 'you should worship Vat Tree, bathe in Ganges etc., so that soon you'll be blessed by two sons.' [7/32/3-4]—from this narration it appears that in all probabilities, Sita's two sons were conceived during the period when the thought occurred in Lord Ram's mind that he ought to leave Sita and when he actually told her his intention.”]

The night that erst no name had worn, to it a happy name is given; for in that stable lay new-born the peaceful Prince of Earth and Heaven, in the solemn midnight centuries ago. [A Christmas Hymn]

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Chapter 11

The Reign of Lord Ram as King of Ayodhya

{Tulsidas has described the reign of Lord Ram as one of being exemplary peace and happiness. There was prosperity and plentifulness everywhere, and the citizens were righteous and law-abiding. Now we shall quote from his classical narration to read how it was.}

Ram Charit Manas:

राम राज बैठे त्रैलोका । हरषित भए गए सब सोका । 7
 बयरु न कर काहू सन कोई । राम प्रताप बिषमता खोई । 18 [7/20/7-8]
 दोहा- बरनाश्रम निज निज धरम निरत बेद पथ लोग ।
 चलहिं सदा पावहिं सुखहि नहिं भय सोक न रोग ।। [Doha 7/20.]
 दैहिक दैविक भौतिक तापा । राम राज नहिं काहुहि ब्यापा ।।
 सब नर करहिं परस्पर प्रीती । चलहिं स्वधर्म निरत श्रुति नीती ।। 2
 चारिउ चरन धर्म जग माहीं । पूरि रहा सपनेहुँ अघ नाहीं ।। 3
 राम भगति रत नर अरु नारी । सकल परम गति के अधिकारी ।। 4
 अल्पमृत्यु नहिं कवनिउ पीरा । सब सुंदर सब बिरुज सरीरा ।। 5
 नहिं दरिद्र कोउ दुखी न दीना । नहिं कोउ अबुध न लच्छन हीना ।। 6
 सब निर्दभ धर्मरत पुनी । नर अरु नारि चतुर सब गुनी ।। 7
 सब गुनग्य पंडित सब ग्यानी । सब कृतग्य नहिं कपट सयानी ।। 8 [7/21/1-8]
 दोहा- राम काज नभगेस सुनु सचराचर जग माहिं ।

काल कर्म सुभाव गुन कृत दुख काहुहि नाहिं ।। [Doha 7/21.]

Lord Ram's installation on the throne brought end to all woes, and it spread of joy in all the three worlds (Trilok) (7).

Lord Ram's glory overcame all disharmony and enmity everywhere (8) [7/20/7-8].

The people followed the path of Vedas, enjoyed happiness, did their assigned duties according to their status in society; they knew no fear, disease, grief or sorrow [Doha 7/20].

No one suffered affliction of any kind (Daihik—bodily, Daivik—coming from supernatural elements, and Bhautik—coming from other animals or creatures or from natural causes) in the kingdom of Lord Ram (1). All loved each other; there was an all-encompassing goodwill, and people followed the precepts of the Vedas (2). Dharma (righteousness, probity and propriety) with its four pillars of Truth, Purity, Compassion and Charity ruled everywhere; no one even dreamt of sin or vices (3). Men and women worshipped Ram faithfully, and were fit for the final salvation of their souls (4). There was no pre-mature death or suffering of any kind; all were healthy and cheerful; their character, deeds, actions, behaviour and thoughts were all righteous and auspicious (5). There was no dearth of anything, nor was there a hint of poverty; there were no destitutes, miserable, wretched, or stupid people (6). All were virtuous, pious, learned, clever, meritorious and accomplished, and there was no deceit, corruption and lies anywhere (8). [7/21/1-8].

Whether animate or in-animate, no one suffered due to time, past deeds, temperament or character or qualities (or the lack of it) [Doha 7/21].

भूमि सप्त सागर मेखला । एक भूप रघुपति कोसला ।।1
 भुअन अनेक रोम प्रति जासू । यह प्रभुता कछु बहुत न तासू ।।2
 सो महिमा समुझत प्रभु केरी । यह बरनत हीनता घनेरी ।।3
 सोउ महिमा खगेस जिन्ह जानी । फिरि एहिं चरित तिन्हहुँ रति मानी ।।4
 सोउ जाने कर फल यह लीला । कहहिं महा मुनिबर दमसीला ।।5
 राम राज कर सुख संपदा । बरनि न सकइ फनीस सारदा ।।6
 सब उदार सब पर उपकारी । बिप्र चरन सेवक नर नारी ।।7
 एकनारि ब्रत रत सब झारी । ते मन बच क्रम पति हितकारी ।।8 [7/22/1-8]
 दोहा- दंड जतिन्ह कर भेद जहँ नर्तक नृत्य समाज ।
 जीतहु मनहि सुनिअ अस रामचंद्र केँ राज ।। [Doha 7/22.]

Lord Ram's domain spread across the entire world girdled by the seven oceans, (i.e. the entire globe) (1). No wonder this, because the macrocosmic form of the Lord has entire Universes as hairs in his cosmic body (2).

Considering the greatness and infinite vastness of the macrocosmic Lord's body (in which form he is known as the 'Hiranyagarbha'), it is actually disparaging and insulting for the Supreme Lord when one talks about Him in the worldly form of one having a physical body with its limitations and grossness (3). Those who have realised the true nature of the Lord (as above), find fondness and taste for the life story as narrated here

(4). One can enjoy the exploits of Lord Ram's physical and visible form only when he considers them to be playful acts of Hiranyagarbha, the Supreme Being, as described above—this is the true wisdom of sages and realised men. [Those who are enlightened and wise realise that it is easier to concentrate the mind on the physical form of the Lord that is visible and understandable rather than contemplating upon his cosmic form that is invisible and too abstract for comprehension.] (5).

Even the Serpent-God (Sheshnath) and the Goddess of learning (Saraswati) can't fully describe the goodness of Lord Ram's reign (6). All people were generous and benevolent like their Lord. They respected the learned and elderly Brahmins (7).

There was universal monogamy, and the wives were devoted and loyal to their husbands in words, deeds and thoughts (8). [7/22/1-8]

'Danda' (stick, staff, cane) was seen in the hands of ascetic and recluses only (i.e. it was never used to punish anyone). 'Bheda' (dissension, variety, difference of opinion) was used only in dance parties and intellectual debates (i.e. rift, deceit, cunning, dissension was never used by people against each other). And the word 'Conquer' was used only with reference to mind, thought and the sense organs (and not against other kingdoms or lands). [Doha 7/22].

फूलहिं फरहिं सदा तरु कानन । रहहिं एक सँग गज पंचानन ॥1
 खग मृग सहज बयरु बिसराई । सबन्हि परस्पर प्रीति बढ़ाई ॥2
 कूजहिं खग मृग नाना बृंदा । अभय चरहिं बन करहिं अनंदा ॥3
 सीतल सुरभि पवन बह मंदा । गुंजत अलि लै चलि मकरंदा ॥4
 लता बिटप मागें मधु चवहीं । मनभावतो धेनु पय स्रवहीं ॥5
 ससि संपन्न सदा रह धरनी । त्रेतां भइ कृतजुग कै करनी ॥6
 प्रगटीं गिरिन्ह बिबिधि मनि खानी । जगदातमा भूप जग जानी ॥7
 सरिता सकल बहहिं बर बारी । सीतल अमल स्वाद सुखकारी ॥8
 सागर निज मरजादाँ रहहीं । डारहिं रत्न तटन्हि नर लहहीं ॥9
 सरसिज संकुल सकल तड़ागा । अति प्रसन्न दस दिसा बिभागा ॥10 [7/23/1-10]
 दोहा- बिधु महि पूर मयूखन्हि रबि तप जेतनेहि काज ।
 मागें बारिद देहिं जल रामचंद्र के राज ॥ [Doha 7/23.]

Trees were ever-green and bore fruits throughout the year in the forest (orchards). The lion and the elephant lived in harmony together as friends (though they are naturally inimical to each other) (1).

All the birds and the beasts of all description had forgotten inherent animosities, and had developed goodwill and friendliness towards each other, and for one and all (2). They moved in the forest fearlessly and cheerfully, making merry and enjoying peace and tranquility (3).

The air was soft, cool and fragrant; bees moved laden with honey (4). Creepers and trees oozed honey when asked for it; cows yielded abundant milk (5). The earth was covered with high-yield crops; even in Treta Yug, it appeared to be Sata Yug (6). The mountains looked like mines of jewels (7), every river had crystal clear, life-sustaining water which was cool, pleasant, tasteful (8). The oceans kept within their bounds and

threw the sea-jewels (shells etc.) on the shore for men's use (9). Ponds were covered with lotus flowers (10). [7/23/1-10].

The moon covered the earth with its soothing light, while the sun shone as much as was required (i.e. there was no scorching heat even during the summer season). The clouds gave abundant rain (i.e. was no drought) [Doha 7/23].

कोटिन्ह ब्राजिमेध प्रभु कीन्हे । दान अनेक द्विजन्ह कहँ दीन्हे ॥१
श्रुति पथ पालक धर्म धुरंधर । गुनातीत अरु भोग पुरंदर ॥२ [7/24/1-2]

Lord Ram performed many horse sacrifices and gave gifts to seekers (1). He was a defender of Vedic precepts, and a champion upholder of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, propriety, probity, ethics and morality). He was above the Satvic, the Rajsic, the Tamsic modes of mental states (2). [7/24/1-2].

Dohawali: Verse nos. 182-186—

182. राम राज राजत सकल धरम निरत नर नारि ।
राग न रोष न दोष दुख सुलभ पदारथ चारि ॥

During the reign of Sri Ram (at Ayodhya), all the citizens (men and women) were following their assigned righteous paths and looked glorious; there was no attachment, anger, faults and sorrows anywhere; the four fruits of Dharma, Artha, Kaam, Moksha were readily available. [182]

183. राम राज संतोष सुख घर बन सकल सुपास ।
तरु सुरतरु सुरधेनु महि अभिमत भोग बिलास ॥

During the reign of Sri Ram, there was contentment and all-round happiness of all kind; all facilities were available both in the forest as well as in the household. The trees were like the celestial Kalpa tree, and the earth resembled the Kamdhenu cow (of the Gods) – both of them provided desired things and comfort. [183]

184. खेती बनि विद्या बनिज सेवा सिलिप सुकाज ।
तुलसी सुरतरु सरिस सब सुफल राम के राज ॥

Tulsidas says that during the reign of Sri Ram, farming, labour, education, business, service, artistry and smithies, and all other types of vocation were like the Kalpa Tree—which provides beautiful fruits as desired. [184]

185. दंड जतिन्ह कर भेद जहँ नर्तक नृत्य समाज ।

जीतहु मनहि सुनिअ अस रामचंद्र के राज ।।

'Danda' (a stick, staff, cane) was seen in the hands of ascetics and recluses only (i.e. it was never used to punish or injure anyone); 'Bheda' (dissension, variety, differences of opinion) was used only in dance parties and intellectual debates (i.e. rift, deceit, cunning, dissension was never used by people against each other); and 'conquer' word was used only with reference to mind and thought (i.e. not against other kingdom or lands). Such was the reign of Sri Ram. [185]

186. कोपें सोच न पोच कर करिअ निहोर न काज ।
तुलसी परमिति प्रीति की रीति राम के राज ।।

Tulsidas says that during the reign of Sri Ram, the custom of love and lovable behaviour had reached its zenith. As a result, no one bothered (paid any heed) if anyone became angry, nor was there any vengeance or retribution. Everyone did each others' work with affection and willingness and there was no sense of obligation. [186]

Geetawali: Raag Sorath: Verse no. 7/1—

बनतें आइकै राजा राम भए भुआल ।
मुदित चौदह भुअन, सब सुख सुखी सब सब काल ।।1
मिटे कलुष-कलैस-कुलषन, कपट-कुपथ-कुचाल ।
गए दारिद, दोष दारुन, दंभ-दुरित-दुकाल ।।2
कामधुक महि, कामतरु तरु, उपल मनिगन लाल ।
नारि-नर तेहि समय सुकृती, भरे भाग सुभाल ।।3
बरन-आस्रम-धरमरत, मन बचन बेष मराल ।
राम-सिय-सेवक-सनेही, साधु, सुमुख, रसाल ।।4
राम-राज-समाज बरनत सिद्ध-सुर-दिगपाल ।
सुमिरि सो तुलसी अजहुँ हिय हरष होत बिसाल ।।5 [7/1]

Verse no. 7/1—Lord Ram became a King on his return from the forest. In his reign, all the 14 Bhuvans (i.e. the whole creation) became happy, and all the people lived happily everywhere, at all times and in every possible way (1). All types of sins, distress, bad behaviour, evil character, deceit, corruption, un-righteous path, vices and viles were destroyed and eliminated, while poverty, extreme depravations, immorality, bad times etc. vanished from the scene (2).

Earth became like it was a Kamdenu cow (a wish fulfilling cow of the Gods), trees became akin to the Kalpataru (the all wish fulfilling tree of the Gods), and ordinary stones became as beautiful and magnificent as if they were priceless gems. All the men and women were lucky and blessed with good fortune; they possessed good characters and noble virtues. They did deeds that were righteous and virtuous and beyond reproach (3). They all followed their respective Varnashram (duties according to their castes or

status in society); were as pure as swan in their words, thoughts and deeds; were devoted and faithful followers of Lord Ram and Sita; loved all and sundry; pure in character and deeds; healthy and courteous (4).

Even the Gods, the Siddhas (persons of special powers and achievement) and the Dikpals (the guardians of the world) praised the kingdom and polity of Lord Ram. Tulsidas says that by remembering those qualities, the heart is overjoyed even today (5). [7/1].

Geetawali: Raag Sorath: Verse no. 7/24—

पालत राज यों राजा राम धरमधुरीन ।
 सावधान, सुजान, सब दिन रहत नय-लयलीन ॥ 1 ॥
 स्वान-खग-जति-न्याउ देख्यो आपु बैठि प्रवीन ।
 नीचु हति महिदेव-बालक कियो मीचुबिहीन ॥ 2 ॥
 भरत ज्यों अनुकूल जग निरुपाधि नेह नवीन ।
 सकल चाहत रामही, ज्यों जल अगाधहि मीन ॥ 3 ॥
 गाइ राज-समाज जाँचत दास तुलसी दीन ।
 लेहु निज करि, देहु निज-पद-प्रेमपावन पीन ॥ 4 ॥ [7/24]

Verse no. 7/24—In this way, the King Lord Sri Ram, who is an expert in righteousness, propriety and probity, looks after his kingdom. [‘In this way’ means that in a way that makes his subjects happy, contented and well looked after so much so that even the Gods feel envious of them.]

That most righteous, noble and courteous gentleman (Sri Ram) is always alert (vigilant towards his responsibilities), and he actively follows the established and sanctioned laws and regulations (i.e. the tenets as established by the Vedas) (1).

The expert Lord Ram presided over the judgement given to the dog, the bird and the ascetic, while he slayed the low-caste to provide a new life to the son of a Brahmin (2)¹.

Like Bharat, the whole world has selfless affection and devotion for the Lord which gets renewed (enhanced) daily. Even as a fish wants fathomless water (and desires nothing else but water), so do everyone want Lord Ram (and nothing else) (3).

Having described the reign and the kingship of Lord Sri Ram (i.e. its glories, happy times, virtues etc.), the lowly and humble Tulsidas also asks for only one thing—that the Lord (Sri Ram) should accept him (as one of his own), and grant him (Tulsidas) the boon of having eternal devotion and affection of the purest kind for the Lord’s feet that are divine and holy (4). [7/24].”

[Note—¹These stories are narrated in ‘Anand Ramayan’ purported to have been written by sage Valmiki.

(a) The *story of the dog and the ascetic*—This is narrated in Anand Ramayan’s Rajya Kand, Purvaardha (first half), verse nos. 1 to 49. Briefly it is as follows— Once, a dog wailed in front of Lord Ram’s palace. It was chased away by the guards for three consecutive days, but when the Lord heard the wailing on

the fourth day he sent Laxman to bring the dog to the royal court, and asked it the reason for its agony. The dog replied that an ascetic had broken its legs by hitting with a stone. Lord Ram summoned the ascetic and asked him why he had hit the poor creature. The ascetic replied that one afternoon he had collected some food by begging but this dog touched it, thereby polluting it. He was hungry, and so he became angry. So he threw a stone to chase away the dog, but unfortunately the stone hit the leg and it broke.

The Lord told the ascetic that it was his fault to get angry at this poor creature who did not have the wisdom to know that it was not supposed to touch the ascetic's food. Perhaps the dog was hungry too. But still it was not so big a crime that would incur such a severe punishment. So the culprit was the ascetic, and therefore he must bear the punishment. The Lord asked the dog what punishment it wished the ascetic be given. At this the dog requested that the ascetic be made an Abbot of a Shiva temple. Immediately, the ascetic was appointed as an Abbot and sent to head a Shiva temple with all the necessary pomp and circumstance.

It was a most un-usual punishment, so the people who had assembled to watch the proceeding asked the Lord to explain. Lord Ram advised them to ask the dog himself. The clever dog replied that in its previous life he was an Abbot himself, and has become a dog in this life due to the sins an abbot commits. Therefore it is sure that this ascetic would become a dog in his next life, and suffer the horrors of such a life as I am subjected to. The dog meanwhile died and its soul attained liberation and deliverance by the grace of Lord Ram because during its last moments the dog had a divine Darshan (sight, view) of the Lord. The ascetic of course thought that that he was extremely lucky, and submerged headlong in enjoying the sensual pleasures of life. In the next birth he did become a dog and was subjected to immense horrors.

²The *story of the bird* revolves around a dispute between an owl and a vulture. It is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Rajya Kand, Purvaardha, verse nos. 123 to 141. Briefly this story is as follows—One day Lord Ram saw an owl and a vulture quarreling fiercely. The bone of contention was the nest on a mango tree. The owl said that the nest belonged to it because it had built it, and the vulture has illegally occupied it and is not vacating. The vulture claimed that the nest belonged to him because it was he who had built it, and the owl had illegally occupied it before he re-occupied the nest.

The Lord asked them if they had any witness to prove who had actually built the nest. Both replied in the negative. So the Lord asked the owl—‘Tell me, when did you built the nest?’ The owl replied—‘Lord, I built it when this earth was created.’

The Lord asked the vulture the same question, and it replied—‘Lord, I built the nest on the mango tree when the earth was still submerged in water prior to its rising to the water's surface.’

The Lord gave the following judgment—‘When the earth was still under water, where was the question of a mango tree, and upon what did it stand? The mango tree can't stand on water. Obviously it is the vulture who is telling the lie.’ So the Lord punished the vulture by getting it hanged, and the nest was restored to the owl.

³The third *story of a Brahmin's son being revived from death* also appears in Anand Ramayan, Rajya Kand, Purvaardha, verse nos. 50 to 120. Briefly it is as follows—Once, a Brahmin's five year old son died. Both the parents came to the palace gates of Lord Ram, grieving and wailing. When the Lord asked them the reason they replied that some sort of wrong activities are going on in his kingdom, and since a king is responsible for everything that happens in his kingdom, the Lord cannot absolve himself from the negative consequences of such acts. When the king is marred by the taint of sin, the subjects suffer by way of pre-mature death, diseases, natural calamities etc. Now therefore, since the son has died due to the king's share of sins, if the Lord does not do anything to revive the dead son, the parents threatened to die also, and then the Lord Ram would be squarely responsible for the horrendous consequences.

The Lord assured the Brahmin that he would ensure that the dead son is revived, but till that time his dead body was put in a tub of oil to prevent decomposition. He even assured the Brahmin parents that if he is unable to revive the dead son then he will offer his own two sons, Lav and Kush to them as compensation.

Lord Ram consulted his Guru Vashistha, and on his advice he mounted on the Pushpak plane to survey his kingdom and find out where any wrong is being done. During the inspection he was confronted with six more dead persons who had died before ripe age. One was a husband whose wife was wailing inconsolably, the second was the dead body of a Kshatriya living in a village called Madhupur, the third was that of a prostitute living in Prayag (Triveni; Allahabad), the fourth was that of an oil merchant from Hastinapur, the fifth was that of a daughter-in-law of an ironsmith of Haridwar, and the sixth was that of a daughter of a woman tanner or cobbler. All the corpses were kept in oil at Ayodhya till the Lord returned.

Meanwhile, the Lord saw at a place that a Shudra (a low caste man) was performing severe penances by hanging upside down from a tree over a fire on the ground and inhaling smoke. This man wished to attain liberation and deliverance, and so he was doing severe form of Tapa. The Lord intervened and said that a Shudra is not supposed to do Tapa because his duty is to serve the society and if he does it diligently then it is equivalent to doing severe Tapa for him. He had violated the sanctified way of code of conduct proclaimed by the Vedas, and since it was a violation of the edict of the scripture it was indeed a sin and a wrongful conduct. It was this wrongful act of his that violated the sanctions of the Vedas which indirectly created a situation when unwarranted deaths and grieving overcame the kingdom of Ayodhya.

The Shudra asked the Lord to give him an easy means to attain liberation and deliverance of his soul if he is not supposed to do Tapa. Seeing that the soul of the Shudra had all the right to attain its emancipation and salvation though it was not supposed to do Tapa, the Lord provided him a simple key—'My holy name 'RAM' is the easiest way for obtaining spiritual liberation and deliverance. So repeat it, and you shall get your desired destination. But since your act that violates the sanction of the Vedas has brought misfortune to my kingdom and others are suffering due to it, I must punish you by killing you. Concentrate your

mind upon my divine Name 'RAM', and though you have to die now you will definitely find emancipation and salvation for yourself. When you die at my hands, you will go straight to my abode in the heaven, the divine abode of Lord Vishnu which is called Vaikunth.' Thus, the Shudra found the heavenly abode of the Supreme Lord very easily.

As soon as this Shudra was punished by the Lord by way of killing him, all the dead persons—including the Brahmin's son—were revived because the sin of violating the sanctions of the scriptures had been eliminated.]

It ought to be noted here that saint Tulsidas has concluded his narration of the divine story of Lord Ram's worldly activities and deeds at this point. He does not go any further than the point of birth of Lav and Kush, the two sons of Lord Ram. The reason is that for this great saint, Lord Ram was the essence and soul of 'life' in this world. As long as there is life on this earth, Lord Ram is here. Just like the case of a body not surviving without a soul and a heart, for Tulsidas everything is lost and life loses its meaning without his beloved 'Ram'. He was not writing history—that sage Valmiki had already done in his own version of Lord Ram's story well known as the Ramayana. He was not writing metaphysical philosophy—that sage Veda Vyas had already done in the Adhyatma Ramayan.

He was in fact singing the song of his devoted heart, the song that came directly from the deep recesses of this blessed soul, and he just could not imagine that the object of his adoration, his devotion, his worship and his dedication, Lord Ram, would leave him alone in this world. For him, his Lord Ram is an eternal Being, a Divine Lord who is eternal and omnipresent. Tulsidas was worshipping his holy Deity, his divine Lord who was the beloved of his soul, the essence of his being and soul of his life by singing the Lord's glory in the best way he could.

When we examine the philosophy of the Upanishads closely and understand their essence, we find that the Supreme Being is an eternal Divinity that does not die or end. There is no corner of this creation where the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness, is not present. So how is it possible that Lord Ram, who is but a manifestation of the Supreme Being, who is the supreme Atma—the Parmatma—personified, could be present in this world now and leave it at some future date?

No one would wish that his beloved should leave him alone in this world by leaving this world himself (or dying), and so true to his vow of being totally committed to Lord Ram and having nothing to do with anything or anyone other than Ram, Tulsidas made the Lord eternal, truly immortal and everlasting by putting him on the throne of Ayodhya, and letting him be there for eternity by closing the narrative at this point!

Since we are hearing the story of Lord Ram from the mouth and in the language of Tulsidas by way of his immortal writings, we shall pay our gratitude to him and express our solidarity with him by rejoicing ourselves in the kingdom of Lord Ram symbolized by our daily lives, and pay obeisance to the Lord as he sits divinely on the throne symbolized by our hearts.

Like Tulsidas, our lives would be one big celebration and one huge festival if we surrender ourselves to Lord Ram and begin to love the Lord and have devotion for him. The greatest song that even a lay person can sing is the sweet name 'RAM' of the Lord, and the greatest music is the ecstasy that would come with the chanting of this holy

Name. The exhilaration of the heart and the mind that accompanies this state of being is like being drowned and getting soaked in an ocean of Amrit, the nectar of eternal contentedness, peace, happiness and bliss.

If this is achieved, the reading of this divine story is fruitful.

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Chapter 12

The Abode of Lord Ram

{In this Chapter we shall see where Lord Ram symbolically resides.}

Ram Charit Manas: 2/128/4–2/132/1

Sage Valmiki told Lord Ram, on his request, the various places where the Lord should reside. Looking at all the places described as being the abode of Ram, we come to the conclusion that they represent epitomes of devotion, spiritualism, righteousness, ethics and probity. No doubt then that those who seek the Lord at these places are led down the good path towards righteous and noble living. These indicative places are our guide to leading a noble and virtuous life, because when we seek God at these places, we tend to constantly remind ourselves that God does not live in an impure, unholy, vicious, corrupted and deceitful environ. It is a sort of 'elimination process' whereby we exclude all the places which are dark, un-righteous, devoid of good and probity because God – who is pure and splendorous like the sun which lightens the world – cannot dwell in spiritual darkness, deceit and ignorance.

जिन्ह के श्रवन समुद्र समाना । कथा तुम्हारि सुभग सरि नाना ।।4

भरहिं निरंतर होहिं न पूरे । तिन्ह के हिय तुम्ह कहूँ गृह रूरे ।।5

लोचन चातक जिन्ह करि राखे । रहहिं दरस जलधर अभिलाषे ।।6

निदरहिं सरित सिंधु सर भारी । रूप बिंदु जल होहिं सुखारी ।।7

तिन्ह के हृदय सदन सुखदायक । बसहु बंधु सिय सह रघुनायक ।।8 [2/128/4-8]

Sage Valmiki advised Lord Ram as follows :-

‘Your abode shall be the heart of those whose ears are like oceans which never get filled even though numerous streams representing various versions of your divine stories keep pouring into them (4-5).

Your abode shall be the heart of those who constantly wish to see you (always concentrate and have their mind fixed on your thought) just like the Chakor bird which gazes at the rain-bearing cloud and its beauty, while scorning at other sources of water such as the ocean, the river and the lakes (6-8).’ [2/128/4-8]

दोहा- जसु तुम्हार मानस बिमल हंसिनि जीहा जासु ।
मुक्ताहल गुन गन चुनइ राम बसहु हियँ तासु ॥ [Doha 2/128.]

‘You should make your abode in the heart of those whose swan-like tongue picks up your virtues which are like pearls in the pristine pure lake known as Mansarovar which symbolizes your fame.’ [Doha 2/128].

प्रभु प्रसाद सुचि सुभग सुबासा । सादर जासु लहइ नित नासा ॥1
तुम्हहि निबेदित भोजन करहीं । प्रभु प्रसाद पट भूषन धरहीं ॥2
सीस नवहिं सुर गुरु द्विज देखी । प्रीति सहित करि बिनय बिसेषी ॥3
कर नित करहिं राम पद पूजा । राम भरोस हृदयँ नहिं दूजा ॥4
चरन राम तीरथ चलि जाहीं । राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥5
मंत्रराजु नित जपहिं तुम्हारा । पूजहिं तुम्हहि सहित परिवारा ॥6
तरपन होम करहिं बिधि नाना । बिप्र जेवाँइ देहिं बहु दाना ॥7
तुम्ह ते अधिक गुरहि जियँ जानी । सकल भायँ सेवहिं सनमानी ॥8 [2/129/1-8]

‘Oh Lord Ram! Live in the thoughts and mind of those whose nose inhales the sacred fragrance of flowers etc. that are offered to their Lord (i.e. yourself) during worship (1); who eat only after offering the food to you first, and accept their clothes and ornaments after first offering them to you, and as a token of your divine grace upon them (2); who bow their heads in reverence and submission before their elders, teachers and Gods (3); who worship Ram's holy feet daily, and who rely on no one else except Ram (4); and who regard the holy feet of Ram as the embodiment and culmination of all pilgrimages (5).

Lord Ram! Live in the heart of those who chant the most holy, the most sacred and the best of all the Mantras in the form of your holy Name, i.e. RAM, and who worship you along with their kin (6); who do penances, offer oblations to the sacred fire in various ways, offer food to the enlightened ones (wise ones—here called Brahamins), and make various charities (7); and those who give their Guru (moral preceptor; wise spiritual teacher) more regard than even to you (i.e. who have greater respect for their elders because it is they who have shown them the divine path leading to Lord Ram) (8).’ [2/129/1-8]

दोहा- सबु करि मागहिं एक फलु राम चरन रति होउ ।
तिन्ह के मन मन्दिर बसहु सिय रघुनंदन दोउ ॥ [Doha 2/129.]

‘And, after having followed all the laws of righteous and noble conduct as prescribed by the scriptures, those who ask for only one fruit or reward for all their auspicious endeavours, the fruit of having devotion in your holy feet—Oh Lord Ram, you should reside in their heart.’ [Doha 2/129.]

काम कोह मद मान न मोहा । लोभ न छोभ न राग न द्रोहा ॥1
जिन्ह के कपट दंभ नहिं माया । तिन्ह के हृदय बसहु रघुगया ॥2
सब के प्रिय सब के हितकारी । दुख सुख सरिस प्रसंसा गारी ॥3
कहहिं सत्य प्रिय बचन बिचारी । जागत सोवत सरन तुम्हारी ॥4
तुम्हहिं छाड़ि गति दूसरि नाहीं । राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥5
जननी राम जानहिं परनारी । धनु पराव बिष तें बिष भारी ॥6
जे हरषहिं पर संपति देखी । दुखित होहिं पर बिपति बिसेषी ॥7
जिन्हहि राम तुम्ह प्रानपिआरे । तिन्ह के मन सुभ सदन तुम्हारे ॥8 [2/130/1-8]

‘Oh Lord Ram! Stay in the heart of those who have no lust, anger, arrogance, hypocrisy, pride, greed, fraud or deceit, excitement of any kind, attractions or aversions—i.e. those who are of a pious and auspicious nature, whose character is immaculate and holy, who remain calm, peaceful, unruffled and equitable under all circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, and who are untouched by worldly corruptions of any kind whatsoever (1-2).

Again, oh Lord Ram, dwell in the heart of those who are friendly and amiable towards all, who are the beloved benefactor for others, who have exemplary virtue of equanimity so much so that they remain unruffled and unmoved in opposing situations of sorrows and joys, who treat abuse and applause equally (3), who scrupulously speak the truth and always use polite words, who have surrendered themselves before you either while they are asleep or when they are awake (4), and who have you as their only support and succour in this world (5).

Further, Lord Ram, those who treat all women as their own mother, other peoples' wealth as worse than poison (6), who are glad at prosperity and happiness of others and feel sorrow at their distress, pain and agony (7), and who love you more than their own lives—the mind of such people is an auspicious place for you to stay in (8).’ [2/130/1-8].

दोहा- स्वामि सखा पितु मातु गुर जिन्ह के सब तुम्ह तात ।
मन मंदिर तिन्ह के बसहु सीय सहित दोउ भ्रात ॥ [Doha 2/130.]

‘Oh Lord Ram! Stay in the 'mind-like-temple' of those for whom you are their only Lord, friend, father, mother, teacher—i.e. for whom you are the only relation that matters in this world, for whom you are the dearest of kin, the most gracious benefactor, the wisest of guide, and the only sustainer and protector.’ [Doha 2/130.]

अवगुन तजि सब के गुन गहहीं । बिप्र धेनु हित संकट सहहीं ॥1
नीति निपुन जिन्ह कइ जग लीका । घर तुम्हार तिन्ह कर मनु नीका ॥2

गुन तुम्हार समुझइ निज दोसा । जेहि सब भाँति तुम्हार भरोसा ॥ 13
 राम भगत प्रिय लागहिं जेही । तेहि उर बसहु सहित बैदेही ॥ 14
 जाति पाति धनु धरमु बड़ाई । प्रिय परिवार सदन सुखदाई ॥ 15
 सब तजि तुम्हहि रहइ उर लाई । तेहि के हृदयँ रहहु रघुराई ॥ 16
 सरगु नरकु अपबरगु समाना । जहँ तहँ देख धरें धनु बाना ॥ 17
 करम बचन मन राउर चेरा । राम करहु तेहि कें उर डेरा ॥ 18 [2/131/1-8]

‘Oh Lord Ram! You have a good abode in the mind of those who discard other's faults and pick up their goodness and virtues, who suffer for the cause of the wise ones and all humble creatures (here represented by the cows) (1), and who are well-versed in the laws of propriety, ethics and righteousness (2).

Again, stay in the heart of those who attribute all good done by them as being done due to your grace, and hold themselves responsible for all the faults (i.e. who do not feel proud of good deeds, and instead remain humble), who have you as their only support and succour (3), and who love those who are your devotees (4).

Further, oh Lord Ram, dwell in the heart of those who abandon all wordly attachments (religion, caste, wealth, fame, family and kin, residence and comfort etc.) and insteads attach themselves to your holy feet (by constantly remembering you instead of anything related to the mundane world) (5-6).

Oh Lord Ram! Make a dwelling in the heart of those for whom heaven and hell, as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death are the same in as much as they behold you (your divine presence) here, there and everywhere else. [It does not matter to them whether they live in heaven or in hell, whether they die or live—because you are everywhere to afford them your love and protection.]. Oh Lord Ram! Live in the heart of those who are your devoted, loyal and faithful servants by their action, deed, thought and speech (8).’ [2/131/1-8]

दोहा- जाहि न चाहिअ कबहुँ कछु तुम्ह सन सहज सनेहु ।
 बसहु निरंतर तासु मन सो राउर निज गेहु ॥ [Doha 2/131.]

‘Oh Lord Ram! Reside permanently in the mind of those who have no desire whatsoever, and instead have a natural and an inherent devotion and faith in you which forms an integral part of their entire being. Oh Ram! Such a holy and uncorrupt mind is deemed to be your own natural dwelling! [Doha 2/131.]’

एहि बिधि मुनिबर भवन देखाए । बचन सप्रेम राम मन भाए ॥ [2/132/1]

In this way, sage Valmiki showed Lord Ram many of the places where he can stay, and the Lord felt immensely satisfied with it [2/132/1].

To cap it all, here is the final verdict from Lord Shiva himself:-

जाके हृदयँ भगति जसि प्रीती । प्रभु तहँ प्रगट सदा तेहिं रीती ॥

हरि व्यापक सर्वत्र समाना । प्रेम ते प्रगट होहिं मैं जाना ॥ [1/185/3,5]

‘The Lord manifests himself at all places where he is remembered with due devotion and love.

Hari (Lord Ram) is all pervading. He manifests himself only by the power of love and devotion.’ [1/185/3,5]

[Note : All the above serves as our practical guide to find Lord Ram, the cause and essence of all the creation, who is both Formless as well as Formed. The main thrust is on having the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, devotion, faith, love and purity of the highest order, and implementing them in one’s thought, deed, action, speech and heart. It’s quite obvious and logical that God, the Supreme Being, who is splendorous and dazzling like the celestial Sun cannot stay in darkness, ignorance and filth.

Where there is light there cannot be darkness. In the heart where the Lord lives there cannot be any sort of dark taints and scars pertaining to this world. Such a heart has to be holy, pure, immaculate, divine and pious. Remember, the heart is where the ‘soul’, the Atma, lives, and the Atma is an image of the Supreme Atma of creation known as the ‘Parmatma’.]

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SECTION 2

The Glory of Lord Ram and His Divine Name

{This section will be exclusively dedicated to highlighting the glory of Lord Ram and his divine Name. We shall select a wide swathe of verses from the writings of Tulsidas to present an exposition on this theme. For this purpose, verses from Ram Charit Manas, Dohawali, Kavitali, Geetawali and Vinai Patrika are selected. To add more colour to this bouquet we shall select a verse from the Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, and from Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad as well.}

Section-2/Part-1

Ram Charit Manas

Baal Kand: 1/19/1-8

बंदउँ नाम राम रघुबर को। हेतु कृसानु भानु हिमकर को॥ 1॥
 बिधि हरि हरमय बेद प्रान सो। अगुन अनूपम गुन निधान सो॥ 2॥
 महामंत्र जोइ जपत महेसू। कार्सी मुकुति हेतु उपदेसू॥ 3॥
 महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ। प्रथम पूजिअत नाम प्रभाऊ॥ 4॥
 जान आदिकवि नाम प्रतापू। भयउ सुद्ध करि उलटा जापू॥ 5॥
 सहस नाम सम सुनि सिब बानी। जपि जेई पिय संग भवानी॥ 6॥
 हरषे हेतु हेरि हर ही को। किय भूषन तिय भूषन ती को॥ 7॥
 नाम प्रभाउ जान सिव नीको। कालकूट फलु दीन्ह अमी को॥ 8॥

I pay my respects to Lord Ram's Name which has the seed letters of the three gods viz. (1) 'Ra' for the Fire-God, (2) 'A' for the Sun God and (3) 'Ma' for the Moon God. [1]

It represents Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Shiva (the destroyer), and is the essence of the Vedas. It is without qualifications, peerless, and an eternal source or fount of all auspicious virtues. [2]

Lord Shiva repeats (chants) this great Mantra (a group of words used as a spiritual formula), and utters them in the right ears of a dying man at Kashi (Varanasi) to give him emancipation and salvation. [3]

Lord Ganesh knows its glory, and it is for this reason (that he chants Ram's Name) that he is worshipped first in all religious ceremonies. [4]

The ancient poet (Valmiki) knows the great effect of this holy Name because he attained purity by chanting this Name in the reverse order. [5]

On hearing from Lord Shiva that Ram's Name is equivalent to thousands of Names of other Gods and Goddesses, Bhavani (Lord Shiva's consort) (decided to) chant this Holy Name along with Lord Shiva. [6]

Lord Shiva was so happy at her decision (of chanting Ram's Name) that he made her the jewel among womenfolk as well as an in-divisible part of his own self. [7]

Lord Shiva knows the great effect and the potency of the Name by the virtue (strength) of which the poison he drank became nectar for him. [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/19

दो0- बरषा रितु रघुपति भगति तुलसी सालि सुदास ।
राम नाम बर बरन जुग सावन भादव मास ॥

Tulsidas says that devotion to Lord Ram's Holy Name is like the rainy season and devotees are like paddy crop; the two syllables of the name 'Ra' and 'Ma' stand for the two months of Shravan and Bhadav which are very auspicious for the growth of paddy.

Baal Kand: 1/20/1-8

आखर मधुर मनोहर दोऊ। बरन बिलोचन जन जिय जोऊ॥ 1॥
सुमिरत सुलभ सुखद सब काहू । लोक लाहु परलोक निबाहू ॥ 2॥
कहत सुनत सुमिरत सुठि नीके। राम लखन सम प्रिय तुलसी के॥ 3॥
बरनत बरन प्रीति बिलगाती । ब्रह्म जीव सम सहज सँघाती॥ 4॥
नर नारायन सरिस सुभ्राता। जग पालक बिसेषि जन त्राता॥ 5॥
भगति सुतिय कल करन बिभूषन। जग हित हेतु बिमल बिधु पूषन॥ 6॥
स्वाद तोष सम सुगति सुधा के। कमठ सेष सम धर बसुधा के ॥ 7॥
जन मन मंजु कंज मधुकर से। जीह जसोमति हरि हलधर से॥ 8॥

Both the letters of Ram's Name are sweet and beautiful as if they were the two eyes of the alphabets and the very life of devotees. [1]

Easy to remember and delightful for all, they give profit here and sustain in after-life. [2]

They are good and delightful to speak, hear and remember; and are as dear to Tulsidas as Ram and Laxman themselves. [3]

The two letters pronounced seperately lose their effect and significance just as Brahma (Supreme Reality) and Jiva (the soul) appear to be different entities but are essentially the same. [4]

Like divine brothers Nara and Narayan, they sustain the universe/ world and particularly redeem the devotees. [5]

They are like earrings that act as decorations for the maiden named Bhakti (a personified form of the virtue of devotion, dedication and submission to the Lord without

any conceit and pretensions). And are beneficial for the world like the untainted celestial bodies such as the sun and the moon. [6]

They taste like nectar and have its qualities (i.e. these two letters of the Lord's holy Name are liberating for the soul and a provider of immense joy to it). They support the earth like the divine Tortoise did (on its back at the time of the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons), and the Serpent God (Sheshnath) does even today (by holding the earth on its hood). [7]

For the devotees' mind which is comparable to a lotus, they are like bees, whereas the tongue is like a plough (Haldhar) for the field (symbolized by the creature's life). [Just like the field is made usable by the plough, repeating the Lord's holy Name makes a man's life worthwhile.] [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/20

दो०- एकु छत्रु एकु मुकुटमनि सब बरननि पर जोउ।
तुलसी रघुबर नाम के बरन बिराजत दोउ॥

Tulsidas says that the two letters of Lord Ram's Name (Ra and Ma) crown all the other alphabets of Hindi language—the former as an 'umbrella' and the latter as a 'crown-jewel' (the 2 half-syllables Ref ['] and Anuswar (the dot put on a letter in Hindi to give it the sound equivalent to the English letter M as in *mum*)).

Baal Kand: 1/21/1-8

समुझत सरिस नाम अरु नामी । प्रीति परसपर प्रभु अनुगामी ॥ 1 ॥
नाम रूप दुइ ईस उपाधी । अकथ अनादि सुसामुझि साधी ॥ 2 ॥
को बड़ छोट कहत अपराधू । सुनि गुन भेदु समुझिहहिं साधू ॥ 3 ॥
देखिअहिं रूप नाम आधीना । रूप ग्यान नहिं नाम बिहीना ॥ 4 ॥
रूप बिसेष नाम बिनु जानें । करतल गत न परहिं पहिचानें ॥ 5 ॥
सुमिरिअ नाम रूप बिनु देखें । आवत हृदयँ सनेह बिसेषें ॥ 6 ॥
नाम रूप गति अकथ कहानी । समुझत सुखद न परति बखानी ॥ 7 ॥
अगुन सगुन बिच नाम सुसाखी । उभय प्रबोधक चतुर दुभाषी ॥ 8 ॥

The Name and the Named (the person), though apparently appearing to be synonymous with each other because they refer to the same entity, are actually different from one another but very closely allied to each other just like a Master is to his servant, the Name being the Master and the Named as the servant (because when the name of a person is called out, he comes immediately like the case of a servant attending to his master's command immediately). [1]

Name and Form are the two attributes of God—both are beyond words, without a beginning or and end, and could be understood with proper wisdom and enlightenment only. [2]

It is wrong to call one or the other as being either big or small (superior or inferior). Only pious souls (Sadhus) will understand this secret after hearing and understanding their characteristics. [3]

Forms are visible manifestations of the entity known by a particular name, and hence dependent on the name, for without the name one cannot know (visualise or think of) the form. [When we say a particular name, say that of our son, his picture immediately comes to our mind. Therefore, the image of the son is directly dependent upon his name.] [4]

A person cannot be identified and known without knowing his name though he may be in front of the eyes. [5]

But if the name is remembered even without seeing the form in a physical plane, the latter flashes (appears) in the mind without special effort and even when one is not too fond of the person to whom the name belongs. [6]

The mystery of the story of Name and Form cannot be told. Though it is delightful and fascinating to understand their relationship, it is difficult to explain it. [That is, the relationship between the name and the form of the entity having that name is a complex one and it cannot be outlined by words; it has to be understood by the intelligent mind alone.] [7]

The name is an intermediary between the all-pervading, invisible, cosmic, unqualified and attributeless Supreme Being and his qualified divine form which is visible and has attributes. The 'name' is like a clever interpreter revealing the truth of both. [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/21

दो०- राम नाम मनिदीप धरु जीह देहरीं द्वार।
तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहुँ जौं चाहसि उजियार॥

Tulsidas says that if you want light both inside and outside of yourself (i.e. knowledge of your own 'truthful self' known as the Atma on the one hand, and of the universal Truth known as the cosmic Self or the Parmatha), then you should keep the lamp of Ram's Name on the doorway/threshold of your mouth (i.e. your lips). [That is, you should constantly chant the holy Name of the Lord with your tongue because it will enlighten your inner-self by cleansing it of all its spiritual impurities, thereby enabling you to experience the truth of the Atma within yourself and to acquire sufficient light of wisdom that would enable you to realise the Supreme Truth of existence in the form of the Parmatma.]

Baal Kand: 1/22/1-8

नाम जीहँ जपि जागहिं जोगी । बिरति बिरचि प्रपंच बियोगी ॥ 1 ॥
ब्रह्मसुखहि अनुभवहिं अनूपा । अकथ अनामय नाम न रूपा ॥ 2 ॥

जाना चाहिं गूढ़ गति जेऊ । नाम जीहं जपि जानहिं तेऊ ॥ 3 ॥
 साधक नाम जपहिं लय लाएँ । होहिं सिद्ध अनिमादिक पाएँ ॥ 4 ॥
 जपहिं नामु जन आरत भारी । मिटहिं कुसंकट होहिं सुखारी ॥ 5 ॥
 राम भगत जग चारि प्रकारा । सुकृती चारिउ अनघ उदारा ॥ 6 ॥
 चहू चतुर कहूँ नाम अधारा । ग्यानी प्रभुहि बिसेषि पिआरा ॥ 7 ॥
 चहुँ जुग चहुँ श्रुति नाम प्रभाऊ । कलि बिसेषि नहिं आन उपाऊ ॥ 8 ॥

Yogis (ascetics; mystics) who are full of dispassion and possess the eclectic virtue of exemplary detachment and renunciation, enjoy happiness and profound bliss because they chant Ram's Name with their tongue. [1]

They are engrossed in contemplation and meditation on the supreme Brahm, and experience the bliss of Brahm-realisation. This Brahm cannot be described in words, is incomparable, nameless and formless. Therefore, the bliss of Brahm-realisation also cannot be described in words, and it is incomparable to anything else. [2]

Those who want to know (discover) the Supreme Truth are able to do so by chanting Lord's divine Name by their tongue. [3]

Seekers (of Supreme Truth) who are absorbed in contemplation, achieve superhuman mystical powers simply by repeating Lord's Name consistently with concentration, devotion and faith. [4]

Greatly distressed devotees who chant Ram's holy Name are relieved of their distress and torments, and instead they become happy and contented. [5]

There are four kind of Ram's devotees, and all of them are fortunate, virtuous, sinless and blessed. [The four types of devotees are the following—(1) Aarta or afflicted, (2) Jigyasu or a seeker of truth, (3) Artharthi or seeker of worldly riches and comforts, and (4) Gyani or one who has become realised and has obtained enlightenment.] [6]

All the four are clever for they rely on Lord Ram's Name. But out of these four, a Gyani (the realised and enlightened one) is very dear to the Lord. [7]

The glory and greatness of Ram's holy and divine Name is well known and well established in all the four Yuga (eras of time, such as the Satyug, Tretayug, Dwaparyug and Kaliyug), as well as in the four Vedas (Rig, Sam, Atharva, Yajur Veda). In Kaliyug especially, there is no other means of salvation. [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/22

दो०- सकल कामना हीन जे राम भगति रस लीन ।
 नाम सुप्रेम पियूष हृद तिन्हहुँ किए मन मीन ॥

Those who have tasted the juice of Ram's devotion without hankering for any sort of desires are deemed to have made their mind into a fish which floats in the pond of nectar made of the lovable Name of the Lord. [That is, their mind thinks of nothing else except enjoying the nectar that drips by repeating the Lord's holy Name. The ecstasy and thrill that comes with such repetition completely overwhelms them so much so that their condition becomes one like that of a fish which would die as soon as it is removed from water.]

Baal Kand: 1/23/1-8

अगुन सगुन दुइ ब्रह्म सरूपा । अकथ अगाथ अनादि अनूपा ॥ 1 ॥
 मोरें मत बड़ नामु दुहू तें । किए जेहिं जुग निज बस निज बूतें ॥ 2 ॥
 प्रौढ़ि सुजन जनि जानहिं जन की । कहउँ प्रतीति प्रीति रुचि मन की ॥ 3 ॥
 एकु दारुगत देखिअ एकू । पावक सम जुग ब्रह्म बिबेकू ॥ 4 ॥
 उभय अगम जुग सुगम नाम तें । कहेउँ नामु बड़ ब्रह्म राम तें ॥ 5 ॥
 व्यापकु एकु ब्रह्म अबिनासी । सत चेतन घन आनंद रासी ॥ 6 ॥
 अस प्रभु हृदयँ अछत अबिकारी । सकल जीव जग दीन दुखारी ॥ 7 ॥
 नाम निरूपन नाम जतन तें । सोउ प्रगटत जिमि मोल रतन तें ॥ 8 ॥

The Supreme Being has two aspects—one is attributeless (unqualified), and the other is one with attributes (qualified). The former is 'Nirguna', and the latter is known as 'Sagun'. Both these forms are beyond words to describe; they are unreachable by the mind as they are fathomless, without a beginning and an end, and peerless. [1]

In my (Tulsidas') view, Ram's Name is greater and more powerful than both (i.e. it transcends both the Sagun and the Nirgun forms of the Lord). In the current era of Kaliyug it has established its authority and potential powers (as the most effective instrument that can provide a creature his liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). [2]

Elders should not take this assertion of mine as being a boastful sermon. What I'm saying is my own conviction that comes out of my own personal experience; I have firm faith in what I say and my mind is convinced of its truth and authenticity. [3]

The two aspects of God are akin to the two aspects of fire—one aspect of fire which is invisible and latent in wood (which is the Nirguna aspect), and the other which is visible (the Saguna aspect). This is the real wisdom of which the wise men talk about. [4]

But the dilemma is that both are inaccessible to the (ordinary) seeker, whereas with this wisdom one can easily attain the Lord. Hence, I have called the Name of the Lord greater than the two aspects of God himself. [The formless aspect of the Lord is too abstract to be understood by an ordinary person and so the Lord goes out of his reach. The formed aspect of the Lord is limited to a specific era of time or place, and it is not possible for all to be physically present where the physical form of the Lord lives. But if one develops the wisdom that the Name of the Lord can be taken anywhere at any time and under any circumstance, and that the Name represents both the Nirgun Lord as well as the Sagun Lord, then the Lord becomes most easily accessible to him day and night.] [5]

Brahm, the Supreme Being who is eternal, attributeless and unqualified, is all-pervading, universal and without a parallel. He is the supreme Truth, the pure Consciousness, and the center from where 'bliss' originates. [6]

Even though such a pure God lives in everyone's heart as his Atma, the people of this world are still nonetheless miserable, wretched and unhappy (because they do not realise that the Lord who is a fount of bliss resides in their own heart and not outside somewhere). [7]

If Ram's divine Name is evaluated properly like a jeweller evaluates a gem, it would dawn upon the seeker that it is like a priceless piece of jewel which can act as a pennaca for all his worldly miseries and torments. [Just like a priceless piece of gem can make a man instantly wealthy and help him overcome all his financial difficulties, the name of the Lord can help him overcome all his worldly and spiritual problems and give him everlasting peace and happiness. But it can only happen when he realises its importance and value.] [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/23

दो०- निरगुन तें एहि भाँति बड़ नाम प्रभाउ अपार।
कहुँ नामु बड़ राम तें निज बिचार अनुसार॥

Thus, in this way, the Lord's Name is far superior to the Supreme Nirguna God himself. Now, I shall tell you how Name is greater than the Divine incarnation of God as Ram (who is the Saguna God or a visible manifestation of the invisible Supreme Being). [That is, a comparison would be now made between the Sagun and the Nirgun aspects of the Supreme Being known as Brahm as well as the Parmatma.]

Baal Kand: 1/24/1-8

राम भगत हित नर तनु धारी। सहि संकट किए साधु सुखारी॥ 1॥
नामु सप्रेम जपत अनयासा। भगत होहिं मुद मंगल बासा॥ 2॥
राम एक तापस तिय तारी। नाम कोटि खल कुमति सुधारी॥ 3॥
रिषि हित राम सुकेतसुता की। सहित सेन सुत कीन्हि बिबाकी॥ 4॥
सहित दोष दुख दास दुरासा। दलइ नामु जिमि रवि निसि नासा॥ 5॥
भंजेउ राम आपु भव चापू। भव भय भंजन नाम प्रतापू॥ 6॥
दंडक बन प्रभु कीन्ह सुहावन। जन मन अमित नाम किए पावन॥ 7॥
निसिचर निकर दले रघुनंदन। नामु सकल कलि कलुष निकंदन॥ 8॥

The Supreme Brahm (who is formless) assumed the form of Ram for the sake and benefit of his devotees, and he had to suffer a lot in order to make the pious ones happy. [1]

On the other hand, even though unaware (unwittingly), devotees become the abode of happiness by chanting Ram's Name with love, devotion and dedication. [That is, though the Lord had to suffer hardship himself when he took a visible form as Lord Ram, the Lord's divine Name is so powerful that all those who say it are freed from all sorts of sufferings and miseries.] [2]

Lord Ram redeemed a single woman (a reference to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who had turned into a stone due to a curse), but his holy divine Name corrected (liberated and delivered) millions of wicked souls (from their wickedness). [3]

To protect sage Viswamitra's Yagya (fire sacrifice), Lord Ram destroyed the demonic woman named Tataka along with her son's army. [4]

While Ram's Name destroys the devotee's vain hopes along with his faults and sorrows, like the (light of the) Sun destroys the darkness of night. [5]

Lord Ram broke the bow of Lord Shiva, but his Name breaks the dread of rebirth of his devotees. [6]

Lord Ram transformed only one inhospitable forest called Dandaka into one that was full of charm and beauty, whereas his divine Name has purified the minds of numerous devotees and made them glorious and praiseworthy. [7]

The son born in the Raghu Dynasty (Lord Ram) crushed only a handful of demons, but his powerful Name crushes all the sorrows, pains, miseries and torments during the era of Kali (which is rich in negativity and its accompanying pains and miseries). [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/24

दो०- सबरी गीध सुसेवकनि सुगति दीन्हि रघुनाथ।
नाम उधारे अमित खल बेद बिदित गुन गाथ॥

Lord Raghu-Nath (the Lord of king Raghu's dynasty; Lord Ram) gave immortality to only a few faithful servants such as Sabari (the low caste woman) and Giddha (a vulture called Jatau), whereas his holy Name has delivered (liberated and provided salvation and emancipation to) numerous wretches—a fact that is well known and lauded even by the Vedas which also sing its divine glory.

Baal Kand: 1/25/1-8

राम सुकंठ बिभीषन दोऊ। राखे सरन जान सबु कोऊ॥ 1॥
नाम गरीब अनेक नेवाजे। लोक बेद बर बिरिद बिराजे॥ 2॥
राम भालु कपि कटकु बटोरा। सेतु हेतु श्रमु कीन्ह न थोरा॥ 3॥
नामु लेत भवसिंधु सुखाहीं। करहु बिचारु सुजन मन माहीं॥ 4॥
राम सकुल रन रावनु मारा। सीय सहित निज पुर पगु धारा॥ 5॥
राजा रामु अवध रजधानी। गावत गुन सुर मुनि बर बानी॥ 6॥
सेवक सुमिरत नामु सप्रीती। बिनु श्रम प्रबल मोह दलु जीती॥ 7॥
फिरत सनेहँ मगन सुख अपनेँ। नाम प्रसाद सोच नहिँ सपनेँ॥ 8॥

As is well known to all, Lord Ram gave refuse to and restored the kingdom of only two—one was Sugriva (the monkey king), and the other was Vibhishan (the brother of Ravana). [1]

On the other hand, the Lord's divine and holy Name has given succour and solace to numerous humble and poor souls (creatures). This Glory is established in the world as well as in the Vedas. [2]

Lord Ram collected an army of bears and monkeys, and took a lot of trouble to construct a bridge across the ocean (to crossover to Sri Lanka to fight and bring back Sita from the clutches of demon Ravana). [3]

But mere pronouncing Lord's Name is enough to dry-up the ocean represented by all the entanglements of this mundane delusory world. So oh wise men, think this over in your mind and ponder over it. [4]

Lord Ram killed Ravana and his entire clan (except Vivhishan), and then returned to his capital Ayodhya along with Sita. [5]

He (then) became king of Ayodhya with Sita as the queen, while Gods and sages sung his praises and virtues in best of terms. [6]

As compared to this, his servants (devotees) are able to conquer an army of faults and delusions (known as Maya) without exertion simply by remembering the Name of the Lord with love and devotion. [7]

These devotees of the Lord roam around cheerfully and fearlessly, absorbed in the thoughts of the Lord and deeply immersed in the ocean of his devotion. By this they derive immense joy and happiness. They are not worried about anything even in their dreams, thanks to the glory and the grace of Lord Ram's holy Name. [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/25

दो०- ब्रह्म राम ते नामु बड़ बर दायक बर दानि ।
रामचरित सत कोटि महँ लिय महेस जियँ जानि ॥

The Name of Lord Ram is greater and superior than Brahm (the Absolute and Supreme Being) himself, and it bestows blessings even on those (i.e. the gods as well as the sages and saints) who themselves are capable of granting boons!

Wise as he was, Lord Shiva selected these two syllables (Ra and Ma that form the divine name of the Lord as 'RAM') out of the one hundred million verses comprising the story of Lord Ram. [That is, out of so many choices and options available to Shiva, he selected these two letters as the easiest means to attain one's spiritual goal as well as to obtain whatever one desires in this world. When these two letters were joined by him, they formed the word 'Ram'. So this became the Mantra which Shiva repeats constantly and consistently, and consequentially he has found eternal bliss and tranquility. Not only this, he became renowned as the wisest amongst the pantheon of Gods.]

Baal Kand: 1/26/1-8

नाम प्रसाद संभु अबिनासी । साजु अमंगल मंगल रासी ॥ 1 ॥
सुक सनकादि सिद्ध मुनि जोगी । नाम प्रसाद ब्रह्मसुख भोगी ॥ 2 ॥
नारद जानेउ नाम प्रतापू । जग प्रिय हरि हर प्रिय आपू ॥ 3 ॥
नामु जपत प्रभु कीन्ह प्रसादू । भगत सिरोमनि भे प्रह्लादू ॥ 4 ॥
ध्रुवँ सगलानि जपेउ हरि नाऊँ । पायउ अचल अनूपम ठाऊँ ॥ 5 ॥
सुमिरि पवनसुत पावन नामू । अपने बस करि राखे रामू ॥ 6 ॥

अपतु अजामिलु गजु गनिकाऊ। भए मुकुत हरि नाम प्रभाऊ ॥ 7 ॥
कहौ कहौ लागि नाम बड़ाई। रामु न सकहिं नाम गुन गाई ॥ 8 ॥

By the grace of Ram's Name, Lord Shiva has become immortal, though he wears inauspicious paraphernalia (such as a garland of serpents, a wreath of skulls etc). He has become a treasury of blessings and auspiciousness. [1]

Those who have attained true bliss such as the sages Suka, Sankadi etc., and other such sages and yogis (mystics) who enjoy the supreme happiness which comes with the blissful state of self and Brahm realisation—have attained it due to the grace of Ram's holy and divine Name. [That is, all of them unimously declare that they have attained the state of eternal blissfulness by relying upon the name of Lord Ram.] [2]

Sage Narad knows the glory, the power and the importance of the holy Name. That is why while the world loves Sri Hari (Vishnu), and Lord Shiva (Har) is dear to Hari (Vishnu), sage Narad is loved by both Har and Hari. [Sage Narad constantly repeats the holy Name of the Lord, and wherever he goes he announces his arrival by saying aloud 'Hari Hari'. The word immediately gives him recognition and invites great respect. He is welcomed everywhere, even by the demons who are otherwise antagonist towards Lord Vishnu one of whose names is Hari. This is because the demons realise that Narad is shielded by a very powerful shield of the Lord's holy Name, and he is invoking the Supreme Being who is the supreme Lord of creation, and therefore of the demons also. Narad has been blessed with the boon of having access to all parts of creation precisely on the strength of the Lord's Name because he goes everywhere chanting the Name. It opens the door for him in all directions of the creation as if it were a magical charm.] [3]

By the grace of Ram's Name, Prahalad became the jewel (i.e. the best) among the devotees of the Lord. [4]

Dhurva chanted Sri Hari's name because he was insulted and ill-treated by his stepmother, but the effect was such that he was given a permanent and immovable place among the stars in the sky (the so called Northern-Star in the Northern hemisphere of the night sky; it remains fixed while other stars appear to move). [5]

By remembering the pure Name, the son of the Wind God (i.e. Hanuman) has kept Lord Ram under his loving sway. [The Lord is exceptionally obliged to Hanuman and on several occasions he had expressed this too. Hanuman was more close to Lord Ram than any other single character in the Ramayana. Whenever the Lord needed help, he looked at Hanuman. Hanuman had always repeated the holy Name of Lord Ram silently, and this gave him immense strength and peace. By the way of the Name, Hanuman was able to have the Lord stay with him always. The best proof of the Lord recognizing this divine quality or character in Hanuman was when the Lord directed him to stay in this world at the time of the Lord's own departure for his heavenly abode at the end of his tenure on this earth, and keep the light of the Lord's glory alight by way of repeating his divine Name and ensuring protection for those who said the Lord's Name. In other words. The Lord had appointed Hanuman as the heir to his legacy, and passed on the baton of Dharma (virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and auspiciousness) and Satya (truth) to him to act as their custodian on the strength of Lord's holy Name.] [6]

The vile and fallen Ajaamil¹, the celebrated elephant known as the Gaja², and Ganika the prostitute/harlot³—they were all liberated by the power of Lord Ram's Name. [7]

Say, how far can I describe the glory of Lord Ram's Name (because I have no words for it). Even Lord Ram himself is unable to sing the glories of his own Name. [8]

[Note—¹Ajaamil, ²Gaja and ³Ganika—The stories related to them have been narrated in a Glossary in appendix no. 2 at the end of this book.]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/26

दो०- नामु राम को कलपतरु कलि कल्याण निवासु।
जो सुमिरत भयो भाँग तें तुलसी तुलसीदास॥

In Kaliyug, Ram's holy Name is like a Kalpataru (the all wish-fulfilling Tree of the Gods) and a gracious benefactor in every way, by remembering and chanting of which Tulsidas has changed from being a 'Bhaang' (a hallucination producing herb having the technical name of Tetrahydro-Cannabinolis) into Tulsi (the Basil or Ocimum plant which is a herb used to sanctify food offered to dieties in Hindu temples, and also as a medicine for its antibiotic properties). [That is, even a useless and despised man becomes a much sought-after and useful one by the good influences and good effects of Ram's holy and divine Name. In effect this means that the correctional properties of the Name removes all the negative virtues present in a creature, and transforms him into a worthy one.]

Baal Kand: 1/27/1-8

चहुँ जुग तीनि काल तिहुँ लोका। भए नाम जपि जीव बिसोका॥ 1॥
वेद पुरान संत मत एहू। सकल सुकृत फल राम सनेहू॥ 2॥
ध्यानु प्रथम जुग मखबिधि दूजें। द्वापर परितोषत प्रभु पूजें॥ 3॥
कलि केवल मल मूल मलीना। पाप पयोनिधि जन मन मीना॥ 4॥
नाम कामतरु काल कराला। सुमिरत समन सकल जग जाला॥ 5॥
राम नाम कलि अभिमत दाता। हित परलोक लोक पितु माता॥ 6॥
नहिँ कलि करम न भगति बिबेकू। राम नाम अवलंबन एकू॥ 7॥
कालनेमि कलि कपट निधानू। नाम सुमति समरथ हनुमानू॥ 8॥

In all the four eras (Sata, Treta, Dwapar and Kali), the three phases of time (past, present, future), and the three lokas (heaven, earth, subterrenean)—countless souls have got liberation and deliverance from sorrows and miseries by chanting the Name of Lord Ram. [1]

The Vedas, Purans and saints have given this unanimous advice—that to have love in Lord's Form and Lord's Name is the result of all virtuous acts. [2]

As a means of finding liberation and deliverance or emancipation and salvation, there was a provision of doing contemplation and meditation during the first era called the Sata Yug. During the second era known as Treta Yug, sacrifices were prescribed. In the third era known as the Dwapar Yug, the Gods were propitiated through worship. [3]

But in the fourth (current) era called Kali Yug, there is only evil and corruption, moral degradation and spiritual impurities all around so much so that the mind of men are rolling in this filthy water like a fish in an ocean of sin. [4]

In such a terrible age, the Name of the Lord is like a Kalpa Taru (an all wish-fulfilling tree), the very remembrance of which can abolish all illusions in this world—i.e. the Name of the Lord can liberate a creature from the net of worldly delusions. [5]

In Kali Yug, Lord Ram's Name can give all desired objects. It is beneficial for the creature in the afterworld after his death, while when he is alive in this world it acts as his caring parent. [6]

In Kali Yug, neither there is a chance to do good deeds, nor is there devotion and wisdom. In this depressing scenario, the only resort or avenue (for the creature if he wishes to attain emancipation and salvation) is Ram's holy Name. [7]

‘Kali’ is like the demon Kalnemi who was like a treasury of falsehood, lies, conceit, deceit and other vices, whereas the Lord's ‘Name’ is like an able and wise Hanuman (who slayed the demon, thereby giving him liberation from bodily bondage in which his soul was trapped). [Kalnemi was sent by Ravana to prevent Hanuman from going ahead to bring the herb that would revive Laxman in the battle-field after he fell unconscious upon being hit by Meghnad's arrow. Kalnemi assumed the form of a hermit to trap Hanuman, but the latter discovered the demon's trick and killed him, thereby liberating his soul from the body of a demon. Similarly, the Lord's powerful Name helps the creature to attain liberation and deliverance from the evil world surrounding him on all sides.] [8]

Baal Kand: Doha 1/27

दो०- राम नाम नरकेसरी कनककसिपु कलिकाल ।
जापक जन प्रह्लाद जिमि पालिहि दलि सुरसाल ॥

Ram's Name is like a Man-Lion (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu as Narsingh) and Kali is like the demon Hiranya-Kasipu. Even as the Man-Lion crushed (killed) the demon who was tormenting the devotee Prahalad (to abandon his devotion to the Lord), the Name of the Lord can destroy all evil forces tormenting the devotees during the era known as Kali.

Baal Kand: 1/28/1-2

भायँ कुभायँ अनख आलसहूँ । नाम जपत मंगल दिसि दसहूँ ॥ 1 ॥
सुमिरि सो नाम राम गुन गाथा । करउँ नाइ रघुनाथहि माथा ॥ 2 ॥

The holy Name of Lord Ram chanted with either good or bad intentions, in an angry mood or even while yawning, will do good in all the ten directions of the world. [The ten

directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.] [1]

After remembering such a powerful Name that is both divine and holy, Tulsidas proceeded to narrate the story of the worldly deeds of Lord Ram. [2]

[Note—It is to be noted that Tulsidas has used all his persuasive skills, all possible arguments, words and language to convince us the importance of remembering, loving, chanting, having unwavering faith, devotion and loyalty in the Holy Name of Lord Ram. He has even admonished and warned us of the consequences of not heeding his advice.

Further, the word ‘Ram’ has been used as being synonymous with and simultaneously to mean both the Nirguna aspect as well as the Sagun aspect of Lord Ram’s divine form. The ‘Nirgun’ refers to that aspect which has no attributes, that is invisible, unmanifest, unqualified, cosmic and all-pervading supreme form of Brahman who is the Absolute Truth in creation, while the ‘Sagun’ refers to that aspect of the same Supreme Being that is visible, has attributes and form.

For those of a higher intellect and wisdom, the former aspect of Nirgun is more appealing, whereas for the ordinary devotees, the Sagun form is more useful. And for those who are neither, he has this advice—to just repeat the Lord’s holy and divine Name even without conviction. Because the medicine once taken will surely show its effects notwithstanding how it was taken—whether it was taken willingly or administered unawares. Besides this, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain for the devotee desperate to find liberation and deliverance.

जयति जयति ओ कृपा निधाना। = Glory to you ! Glory to you ! Oh My Lord, you are the abode/store house of mercy.]

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Section-2/Part-2

Dohawali

{Tulsidas’ Dohawali has a chain of verses extolling the divinity of Lord Ram and expounding the glory of his holy and divine Name. We shall now read what it says by selecting an assortment of verses.}

1. राम बाम दिसि जानकी लखन दाहिनी ओर ।
ध्यान सकल कल्याणमय सुरतरु तुलसी तोर ।।

Meditating on Lord Ram, who has Sri Janki (Sita, his consort) on his left and Laxman (his brother) on his right, is all beneficial by every way. Oh Tulsi! For you, it is like the Kalpa Tree (the celestial tree of Gods) which can fulfill all your wishes.

2. सीता लखन समेत प्रभु सोहत तुलसीदास ।
हरषत सुर बरषत सुमन सगुन सुमंगल बास ॥

Tulsidas says that Lord Ram appears beautiful along with Sri Sita and Sri Laxman; The Gods are showering flowers from the heavens, brimming over with happiness. This vision of the Lord (i.e. meditating upon such a posture or portrait of the Lord) is the abode of all good omens and auspiciousness.

3. पंचवटी बट बिटप तर सीता लखन समेत ।
सोहत तुलसीदास प्रभु सकल सुमंगल देत ॥

Lord Ram is seated, along with Sita and Laxman, under the huge Banyan tree in Panchvati hermitage (during his exile). Tulsidas says this vision can provide all auspiciousness and welfare.

[Note : This verse shows that Tulsidas favours the posture and view of Ram as a hermit or an ascetic as opposed to his being seated on the throne of Ayodhya as a King. Probably because, as a hermit leading an austere and contemplative, hard life, Sri Ram seems a far better redeemer of the soul as compared to a King who lives in comfort and surrounded by the regalia of a sovereign, away from the suffering, trials and tribulations of an ordinary human being].

4. चित्रकूट सब दिन बसत प्रभु सिय लखन समेत ।
राम नाम जप जापकहि तुलसी अभिमत देत ॥

Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, always reside in Chitrakoot. Tulsidas says he (Sri Ram) fulfils the wishes of all those who (constantly) chant his name (i.e. the holy Mantra 'Ram').

5. पय अहार फल खाइ जपु राम नाम षट मास ।
सकल सुमंगल सिद्धि सब करतल तुलसीदास ॥

Chant Lord Ram's holy name for 6 months, surviving either by drinking milk or eating fruits. Tulsidas says by doing so all 'Siddhis' (achievements, fruits of labour, attainments in life) and auspiciousness would be available themselves (i.e. without effort or striving for them separately).

6. राम नाम मनिदीप धरु जीह देहरीं द्वार ।
तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहुँ जौं चाहसि उजिआर ॥

Tulsidas says that if you wish to light both the inside and outside of you (i.e. have enlightenment, knowledge of both mundane world as well as the spiritual), the best way is to keep the lamp of Ram's name on the doorway of your mouth (i.e. keep on constantly chanting the holy name of 'Ram'). [An ordinary lamp can be put out either by lack of oil or a gust of wind, thereby causing darkness. But Sri Ram's holy name is such that the illumination would be permanent].

7. हियँ निर्गुन नयनन्हि सगुन रसना राम सुनाम ।
मनहुँ पुरट संपुट लसत तुलसी ललित ललाम ॥

Tulsidas says remembering the formless Absolute Truth in the heart, keeping the vision of the formed variant of that Truth in the form of Lord Ram (as narrated in verses 1-3) in front of the eyes, and chanting the beautiful name (Ram) by the tongue— these are like gems preserved in a golden box. According to Tulsidas, the Lord's holy name is far superior to either or both Saguna as well as Nirguna God. [In this verse, Ram's holy name is compared to a gem, and Saguna and Nirguna aspects of God are like the bottom and top of the box].

8. सगुन ध्यान रुचि सरस नहिं निर्गुन मन ते दूरि ।
तुलसी सुमिरहु रामको नाम सजीवन मूरि ॥

One does not have devotional interest in Saguna (formed) God, nor does one understand the true essence of Nirguna (formless) Absolute called God. Tulsidas says in such a condition one should partake of the herb called Sri Ram's holy name (i.e. the holy mantra of Sri Ram) as a remedy for all ills [Tulsidas means that since the other two means of salvation of soul i.e. total devotion to the incarnation of God in the form of Sri Ram's Bhakti and realisation of the true nature of Lord Ram, which is the formless, the all-pervading and the all-encompassing Absolute Truth, are not within easy reach of us, the easiest and surest route to achieve the same goal without much effort is to chant Lord Ram's holy Name—'RAM'—which is accessible even to the illiterate as well as the enlightened ones. It's an infallible, sure cure, for all spiritual and worldly ailments afflicting the creature.]

9. एकु छत्रु एकु मुकुटमनि सब बरननि पर जोड ।
तुलसी रघुबर नाम के बरन बिराजत दोड ॥

Tulsidas says that the two letters of Lord Ram's name (Ra and Ma) crown all the words and alphabets of the Hindi language—the former as an umbrella [the sign (ऀ) put on the

top of a letter and pronounced as 'ref'—e.g. the equivalent to the English word *rum* or *wrung*], and the other as a crown jewel [the dot-sign (.) put on the top of a letter and pronounced as 'anuswar' which has an equivalent English pronunciation in the word *rung*].

10. नाम राम को अंक है सब साधन हैं सून ।
अंक गएँ कछु हाथ नहीं अंक रहें दस गून ॥

Lord Ram's holy name is like a 'numeral' and all other means of salvation are like 'zero' [0]. This zero has no value if it is not preceded by any of the numerals – and when it does, its value increases ten fold. [All means of salvation become more effective if they are accompanied by chanting Sri Ram's name; it's like adding a pinch of salt to food because no matter how nutritious the food is, it would not be palatable without salt]. Without Ram's name, all efforts are fruitless.

11. नामु राम को कलपतरु कलि कल्याण निवासु ।
जो सुमिरत भयो भाँग तें तुलसी तुलसीदासु ॥

In Kaliyug, Lord Ram's holy name is like a Kalpataru (the all wish fulfilling celestial tree) and benefactor of all in every way, by remembering and chanting of which Tulsidas has changed (i.e. transformed) from Bhang (a hallucination producing herb called Tetra hydro – cannabis sativa) into Tulsi (the leaf of the Basil plant that is used to sanctify food offered to deities, and is also as a medicine for its antibiotic properties). [That is, a humble and despised man becomes a much sought-after and useful person by the good influences and effects of Sri Ram's holy Name].

12. राम नाम जपि जीहँ जन भए सुकृत सुखमालि ।
तुलसी इहाँ जो आलसी गयो आजु की कालि ॥

Tulsidas says that by chanting Lord Ram's holy name, people have become purified, most happy and contented. But those who are lazy in chanting the name are bound for destruction sooner or later.

13. नाम गरीबनिवाज को राज देत जन जानि ।
तुलसी मन परिहरत नहीं घुर बिनिआ की बानि ॥

Tulsidas says the name of Lord Ram is such a magnanimous benefactor and benevolent giver that it gives the kingdom of the world to those who chant it (i.e. it gives salvation to the soul of those who repeat the holy Name of the Lord), thinking them to be loyal servants of the Lord. But this mind is such a miserable wretch and a un-believer that it

does not abandon its habit of searching grains in a rubbish heap (i.e. it seeks pleasure in base elements and sense objects of this world.)

14. कासीं बिधि बसि तनु तजें हठि तनु तजें प्रयाग ।
तुलसी जो फल सो सुलभ राम नाम अनुराग ॥

Tulsidas says that the fruit in the form of salvation of soul which one obtains by staying and dying in Kashi (Varanasi) or by leaving the mortal body forcefully (i.e. by doing severe penances and austerities) in Prayag (the modern-day city of Allahabad; also known as Triveni—because three holy rivers, the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, meet each other here), the same fruit can be obtained very easily by having love and affection for Lord Ram's holy Name (i.e. one can reach the Supreme Lord himself by the means of his holy Name).

15. मीठो अरु कठवति भरो रौताई अरु छेम ।
स्वारथ परमारथ सुलभ राम नाम के प्रेम ॥

Having sweets but by the bowlful; having the rights of a king but abstain from pride and pleasures of deluding sense organs; and having the benefits of this selfish world as well as the welfare of the soul—Tulsidas says it is very difficult to have such opposite benefits at the same time. But they are possible, thanks to the beneficial effects and power of Lord Ram's holy Name.

16. राम नाम सुमिरत सुजस भाजन भए कुजाति ।
कुतरुक सुरुपुर राजमग लहत भुवन बिख्याति ॥

By remembering Lord Ram's holy Name, even lowly people (i.e. those of low birth such as Ganika and Ajamil) became eligible for good fame in this world. Worthless trees lining the route to heaven (i.e. trees near the bank of Ganges) become famous in the three worlds (Tribhuvan). [This route to heaven has only symbolic value].

17. स्वारथ सुख सपनेहुँ अगम परमारथ न प्रबेस ।
राम नाम सुमिरत मिटहिं तुलसी कठिन कलेस ॥

Tulsidas says that those who neither have happiness in this mundane world even in their dreams nor have entry on the path of salvation and attainment of final bliss can eliminate their torments and sufferings by remembering Lord Ram's holy Name.

18. मोर मोर सब कहँ कहसि तू को कहु निज नाम ।
कै चुप साधहि सुनि समुझि कै तुलसी जपु राम ॥

You call every one 'mine', but tell me who are you, and what is your real name? Tulsidas says that either you should realise your 'true self' (stop differentiating between myself and yourself), and having thus becoming truly 'realised and enlightened', be quiet and turn inwards towards the Lord that resides within you, or simply chant Lord Ram's holy Name (as the easier way out of this debate and dilemma).

19. हम लखि लखहि हमार लखि हम हमार के बीच ।
तुलसी अलखहि का लखहि राम नाम जप नीच ॥

[Addressing a mystic who chanted 'Alakha', meaning an entity that is not visible and referring to the Supreme Being who has no form and attributes, Tulsidas admonishes him, saying :-]

'Oh you Mystic! First you must understand the true nature and form of your own 'self', and it is only then that you become eligible to talk about invisible and formless 'Parmatma', the Supreme Being, to whom you refer by using the term 'Alakha. After that, recognise the 'Maya' (delusions) that separates your 'true self' and Brahm. Oh you wretched! How can you understand or comprehend the Supreme Being who is invisible and unknown without first understanding these three entities—the truth about your own 'self', the truth about Brahm, and the effects of Maya. Hence, chant Lord Ram's holy Name instead of shouting 'Alakha', literally meaning 'the one who cannot be seen'.

[Note—Tulsidas admonishes the mystic and says that he goes about shouting 'Alakha' as if he has known the truth of the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma or the cosmic Soul of creation. To know the Parmatma is not that easy as it seems. The mystic does not even know what his true 'self' is, and therefore he has no right to preach about the supreme Self of this creation.

From the metaphysical point of view, the truthful 'self' of a living being—called the Jiva—is his Atma which is pure consciousness. This individual Atma is a microcosmic form of the supreme Atma which is the Cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma. Both the 'Atma' and the 'Parmatma' are the same; the only difference is in the plane of existence. Whereas the Jiva has a gross body and a gross existence, the Parmatma is subtle and formless. But the 'consciousness' that is called the Atma or the soul is the same in both the cases. The Maya is that delusion which separates the Atma from the Parmatma; the Jiva begins to treat himself as separate from the Parmatma under the influence of the Maya.]

20. राम नाम अवलंब बिनु परमारथ की आस ।
बरषत बारिद बूँद गहि चाहत चढ़न अकास ॥

Those who expect their salvation without taking the refuge of Lord Ram's holy Name are trying to ascend to the sky by holding falling rain drops. [That is, as it is impossible to

rise to the sky astride falling rain drops, so it is equally impossible to attain salvation without chanting Lord Ram's holy Name.]

21. तुलसी हठि हठि कहत नित चित सुनि हित करि मानि ।
लाभ राम सुमिरन बड़ो बड़ी बिसारें हानि ॥

Tulsidas addresses his mind and attention with earnest sincerity, 'Oh Mind! Listen to what I say as being most beneficial for your welfare. Remembering Lord Ram is the greatest profit (benefit) that you can ever have, and forgetting him is the biggest loss for you.

22. बिगरी जनम अनेक की सुधरै अबहीं आजु ।
होहि राम को नाम जपु तुलसी तजि कुसमाजु ॥

Tulsidas advises, 'You should abandon all bad company and thought from your mind, and instead should identify yourself with Lord Ram (i.e. surrender yourself to Ram) and chant his divine Name. By doing so, all the accumulated bad effects of the deeds done by you in so many previous births can be rectified immediately and instantly.'

23. प्रीति प्रतीति सुरीति सों राम राम जपु राम ।
तुलसी तेरो है भलो आदि मध्य परिनाम ॥

Tulsidas says that one should chant Lord Ram's holy Name with faith, love, devotion and according to the prescribed method, because by doing so one will have all-round welfare and all types of good fortunes in the present, in the middle of the future, and even in the distant future.

24. दंपति रस रसना दसन परिजन बदन सुगेह ।
तुलसी हर हित बरन सिसु संपति सहज सनेह ॥

Tulsidas says that the sweet taste of Lord Ram's holy Name (i.e. the sense of euphoria and exhilaration that comes by saying it) and the tongue (which says the Name) are like husband and wife, the teeth are like relatives, the mouth is a beautiful home, Lord Shiva's beloved two syllables 'Ra' and 'Ma' are like two adorable children, and natural affection towards them (Ra + Ma) is the wealth of a person. [That is, a wise man who seeks liberation and deliverance from this world inspite of having to live in it to fulfill his obligations can easily do so by taking refuge in the name of the Lord, and repeating this holy Name which would help him break free from all worldly fetters even without his knowing of them.]

25. बरषा रितु रघुपति भगति तुलसी सालि सुदास ।
रामनाम बर बरन जुग सावन भादव मास ॥

Tulsidas says that Lord Ram's devotion is like the rainy season, best servants (i.e. loving devotees of the Lord) are the grains, and the two syllables 'Ra' and 'Ma' of Lord Ram's holy Name are the two Hindu months of Saawan and Bhaadon. [Even as the grains sown during the rainy season consisting of these two months yield rich harvest, the devotee too gets immense pleasure and benefits richly in spiritual terms by devotionally chanting Ram's holy Name.]

26. राम नाम नर केसरी कनककसिपु कलिकाल ।
जापक जन प्रह्लाद जिमि पालिहि दलि सुरसाल ॥

Lord Ram's holy Name is like a Man-Lion (an incarnation of God, called Narsingh) and Kali is the demon named Hiranya-Kasipu. Even as the Man-Lion crushed (killed) the demon who was tormenting the devotee Prahalad (to abandon his devotion for the Lord), the Name of the Lord can destroy all evil forces tormenting the devotees.

27. राम नाम कलि कामतरु राम भगति सुरधेनु ।
सकल सुमंगल मूल जग गुरुपद पंकज रेनु ॥

In the era of Kali (i.e. the present age), Lord Ram's holy Name can bestow desired fruits (benefits) to the devotee, devotion for the Lord is like the all wish fulfilling Kamdhenu cow (the celestial cow of Gods), and the dust from the feet of the Guru (wise, moral teacher) is the root of all welfare and fortunes (i.e. good luck and auspiciousness) for him (devotee).

28. राम नाम कलि कामतरु सकल सुमंगल कंद ।
सुमिरत करतल सिद्धि सब पग पग परमानंद ॥

Lord Ram's holy Name is like a Kalpa Tree (the celestial tree of Gods and provider of all fruits) in the era of Kali and the root of all good fortunes. Remembrance of Lord Ram's Name provides all fortunes as if they are already present on one's palm (i.e. easily available), and one gets bliss at every step of the way.

29. जथा भूमि सब बीजमय नखत निवास अकास ।
राम नाम सब धरममय जानत तुलसीदास ॥

Tulsidas knows the secret that Lord Ram's holy Name is the embodiment of all Dharma (religions, probity, propriety, auspiciousness and righteousness) like the whole earth which is full of seeds and the sky is full of stars. [As the earth contains numerous seeds or

the sky is dotted with stars, so is Lord Ram's name inherently embedded and infused with Dharma. In other words, all the benefits of having good virtues and righteous qualities that one expects to acquire in this world can be had by simply having this one single Name of the Lord. All of them come automatically to a person who repeats the holy Name of Lord Ram.]

30. सकल कामना हीन जे राम भगति रस लीन ।
नाम सुप्रेम पियूष हृद तिन्हहुँ किए मन मीन ॥

Those who have tasted the juice of Lord Ram's devotion without hankering for any type of desires are like a fish which floats in the pond of nectar and derives immense pleasure and bliss from it.

31. ब्रह्म राम तें नामु बड़ बर दायक बर दानि ।
राम चरित सत कोटि महँ लिय महेस जियँ जानि ॥

The name of Lord Ram is greater and superior to Brahm (the Absolute and Supreme Being) and bestows blessings even on those (Gods) who themselves are capable of giving boons to others. Wise as he was, Lord Shiva selected these two syllables (Ra and Ma) which constitute the Lord's name 'Ram' out of 100 crore (millions of) verses comprising the story of Lord Ram in its myriad variations.

32. सबरी गीध सुसेवकनि सुगति दीन्हि रघुनाथ ।
नाम उधारे अमित खल बेद बिदित गुन गाथ ॥

Raghunath (the Lord of king Raghu's dynasty; Lord Ram) gave immortality to only a few faithful servants (i.e. devotees) such as Sabari (a low caste woman) and Gidha (a vulture called Jatau), whereas his holy Name has delivered (liberated) numerous wretches – a fact known well by the Vedas and its glory sung by them.

33. राम नाम पर नाम तें प्रीति प्रतीति भरोस ।
सो तुलसी सुमिरत सकल सगुन सुमंगल कोस ॥

Tulsidas says those who are devoted to Lord Ram's holy Name, and have affection for it, a firm belief in it and have no other support except its strength, such persons become a treasury of all good virtues and auspiciousness as soon as they remember the holy Name of the Lord.

34. लंक बिभीषन राज कपि पति मारुति खग मीच ।
लही राम सों नाम रति चाहत तुलसी नीच ॥

Vibhishan obtained the crown of Lanka, Sugriv got the kingdom (of Kishkindha), Hanuman received fame as a loyal devotee and follower, and the vulture Jatayu achieved death which is unattainable even by the Gods. But, Tulsidas says, he only wants love and affection in the Name of the Lord, though he is so wretched and not as fortunate as them (because he knows that the Name of the Lord will deliver to him all the benefits that those named in this verse got by the personal intervention of Lord Ram).

35. हरन अमंगल अघ अखिल करन सकल कल्याण ।
रामनाम नित कहत हर गावत बेद पुरान ॥

Lord Ram's holy Name eliminates all misfortunes and sins, and is exceptionally beneficial in every way. This is why Lord Shiva constantly keeps on repeating Ram's holy name, and it is also praised by the Vedas and the Purans.

36. तुलसी प्रीति प्रतीति सों राम नाम जप जाग ।
किँ होइ बिधि दाहिनो देइ अभागेहि भाग ॥

Tulsidas says that by performing a Yagya (a religious ritual usually associated with some fire sacrifice) in the form of repeating Ram's holy Name, even Vidhata (the creator) becomes benign and favourable, thereby making the most unfortunate man into a lucky person.

37. जल थल नभ गति अमित अति अग जग जीव अनेक ।
तुलसी तो से दीन कहँ राम नाम गति एक ॥

There are millions of (countless) creatures—both animate as well as inanimate in this world. Some have their abode underground, some on land, and some in the air. Tulsidas says that for him, Lord Ram's holy Name is the only destination. [A creature finds a destination or is born in the new life into a world according to deeds by him in his previous life. Therefore, some are born as birds who are sky borne, some as animals and humans who live on the surface of the earth, and others who live underground in holes, such as snakes, and under water such as the marine creatures and those who live in water of lakes and ponds. But Tulsidas says that he is not bothered, for the only destination for him is Lord Ram; wherever he is born he will be living in the bliss of his Lord, so it does not matter. Another interpretation is that Tulsidas is certain of his destiny—he will surely find emancipation and salvation by attaining the Supreme Being known as Ram because he has been chanting the Lord's divine Name throughout his life.]

38. राम भरोसो राम बल राम नाम बिस्वास ।
सुमिरत सुभ मंगल कुसल माँगत तुलसीदास ॥

Tulsidas asks for only one boon—that he should only have reliance on Lord Ram's Name, that Lord Ram should be his only strength, and that he should believe only in Lord Ram's holy Name, the mere remembrance of which provides auspiciousness, well-beings and good fortunes.

39. राम नाम रति राम गति राम नाम बिस्वास ।
सुमिरत सुभ मंगल कुसल दुहुँ दिसि तुलसीदास ॥

Tulsidas says that those who love Lord Ram's holy Name, have Lord Ram as their only destination, and believe in none other than the Lord's holy Name—for such people the mere remembrance of Lord Ram's holy Name gives auspiciousness, well-being and good fortunes in both the worlds (this mundane world as well as the world to which they go after death).

40. रसना साँपिनि बदन बिल जे न जपहिं हरिनाम ।
तुलसी प्रेम न राम सों ताहि बिधाता बाम ॥

Tulsidas says the tongue of those who do not chant Sri Hari's (Ram's) Name is like a serpent which only pours venom of worldly talks, and their mouth is like the serpent's pit (hole). Those who have no love for Lord Ram, the creator appears to be opposed to them (i.e. they are most unlucky, for then they can never get peace, happiness and bliss anywhere).

41. हिय फाटहुँ फूटहुँ नयन जरउ सो तन केहि काम ।
द्रवहिं स्रवहिं पुलकइ नहीं तुलसी सुमिरत राम ॥

Tulsidas says those hearts that do not melt (become mellowed) on remembering Lord Ram should burst (crack, die, disintegrate), those eyes that do not shed tears of love should be blinded, and that body which does not become thrilled should be burnt—for what is the use of keeping such a despicable body and its various parts, and it is better got rid of.

42. रामहि सुमिरत रन भिरत देत परत गुरु पायँ ।
तुलसी जिन्हहि न पुलक तनु ते जग जीवत जायँ ॥

At the time of remembering Lord Ram, facing enemy during a rightful combat, giving alms and donation, and at the time of bowing at the feet of the Guru (enlightened moral teacher) – those who are not thrilled on such occasions live a worthless life.

43. हृदय सो कुलिस समान जो न द्रवइ हरिगुन सुनत ।
कर न राम गुन गान जीह सो दादुर जीह सम ॥

The heart, which does not become mellowed and full of devotion on hearing Sri Hari's (Sri Ram's) glories, is hard (i.e. stiff, unemotional) like a Vajra (thunderbolt; literally 'hard as a stone'); and a tongue, which does not sing the glories of Lord Ram, is croaking like that of a frog's.

44. स्रवै न सलिल सनेहु तुलसी सुनि रघुबीर जस ।
ते नयना जनि देहु राम करहु बरु आँधरो ॥

Tulsidas pleads, 'Oh Sri Ram! It is better for me to become blind than to have eyes which do not shed tears of devotion and love on hearing your name.'

45. रहैं न जल भरि पूरि राम सुजस सुनि रावरो ।
तिन आँखिन में धूरि भरि भरि मूठी मेलिये ॥

'Oh Sri Ram! Those eyes which do not well-up with devotional and affectionate tears on hearing your name should be stuffed with fistful of dust (i.e. they are worthless and have no right to see). '

46. बारक सुमिरत तोहि होहि तिन्हहि सम्मुख सुखद ।
क्यों न सँभारहि मोहि दया सिंधु दशरत्थ के ॥

'Even an ordinary child is provided with joys and happiness by you (Lord Ram) and you take good care of him. Tell me then why won't the same Lord (Ram) who is the son of Dasrath and an ocean of mercy and compassion not take care of me?'

47. साहिब होत सरोष सेवक को अपराध सुनि ।
अपने देखे दोष सपनेहु राम न उर धरे ॥

Other masters become angry and annoyed immediately on hearing the mistakes or wrong-doings of their servants (without finding out the actual facts), but Lord Ram is so magnanimous and gracious that he does not pay any heed to such errors even when he has seen them himself (i.e. Lord Ram does not bother about the faults and shortcomings of his devotees; he overlooks them).

57. राम प्रेम बिनु दूबरो राम प्रेमहीं पीन ।
रघुबर कबहुँक करहुगे तुलसिहि ज्यों जल मीन ॥

A fish gets nourishment in water, becomes emaciated without it, and dies if totally deprived of it. Similarly, Tulsidas wonders when shall he develop such profound degree of love and affection for Raghubar (Sri Ram) that he would become emaciated without the Lord, and feel nourished (well-off, happy and contented) by having love and affection for the Lord.

58. राम सनेही राम गति राम चरन रति जाहि ।
तुलसी फल जग जनम को दियो बिधाता ताहि ॥

Tulsidas says that one who loves only Lord Ram, whose aim or goal in life is (the attainment of) Lord Ram, and who has devotion and affection only for the feet of Lord Ram—well, the creator has bestowed such a person with the real fruit of taking birth in this world. [That is, such a person is indeed most lucky and enjoys the fruit of life by way of happiness, joys, bliss, contentedness, pleasures and comforts of all kinds, as well as fame and a secured future in the form of liberation and deliverance.]

59. आपु आपने तें अधिक जेहि प्रिय सीताराम ।
तेहि के पग की पानहीं तुलसी तनु को चाम ॥

Those who have greater love for Lord Ram than for any of the material things belonging to or related to them—if Tulsidas is beaten or even touched by the footwear of such people he would consider himself fortunate. [Tulsidas means to say that such people are indeed very fortunate and holy.]

60. स्वारथ परमारथ रहित सीता राम सनेहँ ।
तुलसी सो फल चारि को फल हमार मत एहँ ॥

Tulsidas says that having a selfless form of deep love and affection for Lord Ram, without expecting any worldly gains from it, or any hope of fulfilling one's objective in this world, or even expecting the salvation of the soul, is a greater (i.e. more important, richer and better) fruit than the acquisition of the four legendary rewards of doing auspicious deeds that come in the form of Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness), Kaam (desires fulfilled) and Moksha (emancipation and salvation of the soul).

61. जे जन रूखे बिषय रस चिकने राम सनेहँ ।
तुलसी ते प्रिय राम को कानन बसहिं कि गेहँ ॥

Tulsidas says that only those who have renounced attachment to desires and are engrossed in enjoying the nectar of love for Lord Ram are the ones who are the beloved of the Lord. It does not matter then whether they stay in the forest (as hermits or ascetics) or live as a householder.

62. जथा लाभ संतोष सुख रघुबर चरन सनेह ।
तुलसी जो मन खूँद सम कानन बसहुँ कि गेह ॥

One who is contented and happy with whatever he gets, and in whom (i.e. in whose heart) love for Lord Ram's holy feet is full to the brim, he whose heart and mind have become like a horse whose hind legs are tied¹—Tulsidas says that for such people, there is no difference between living in a forest or as a householder.

[Note—¹When the hind legs of a horse are tied it cannot go anywhere inspite of moving its front legs constantly. Similarly, when one has tied oneself at the holy feet of Sri Ram, then his mind and heart don't wonder from place to place.]

63. तुलसी जौं पै राम सों नाहिन सहज सनेह ।
मूँड मुड़ायो बादिहीं भाँड़ भयो तजि गेह ॥

Tulsidas says that if one does not have natural love and devotion for Sri Ram, then it is useless to tonsure the head (i.e. leave the household and pretend to be a monk or ascetic).

80. निगम अगम साहेब सुगम राम साँचिली चाह ।
अंबु असन अवलोकित सुलभ सबै जग माँह ॥

Lord Ram, who is beyond comprehension even by the Vedas, can be easily made accessible by pure devotion and earnest search (by the spiritual seeker) like water and food are very easily available to all in this world. [Water and food has also to be sought by the needy—they won't come automatically to the thirsty and the hungry till the latter make basic effort to get them though they are available aplenty in this world. So is the case with the Lord—he is easily accessible and ready to walk the extra mile only if the devotee of the seeker makes some basic effort. And the simplest effort that he is expected to make is having devotion and love for Lord Ram.]

81. सन्मुख आवत पथिक ज्यों दिँ दहिनी बाम ।
तैसोइ होत सु आप को त्यों ही तुलसी राम ॥

Tulsidas says that a pedestrian coming to you from the opposite direction would pass by your left or right depending on the right-of-way you give to him. Similarly, Lord Ram would respond to you depending on the quality of your devotion, faith, earnesty and sincerity.

95. रामहि डरु करु राम सों ममता प्रीति प्रतीति ।

तुलसी निरुपधि राम को भएँ हारेहूँ जीति ।।

Be afraid of Lord Ram. Have affection, love and reverence only for Lord Ram. Have steady faith and firmness of belief in Lord Ram. Tulsidas says that by becoming totally dependent upon Lord Ram and relying upon the Lord in an honest, truthful and sincere manner one can ensure victory in the face of apparent defeat. [That is, when one who has totally surrendered one's self to the Lord, the Lord takes up the responsibility of his care and well-being.]

96. तुलसी राम कृपाल सों कहि सुनाउ गुन दोष ।
होय दूबरी दीनता परम पीन संतोष ।।

Tulsidas advises that one should make an honest and full confession to Lord Ram about one's virtues (goodness) and faults (shortcomings). By doing this, one's miseries and problems will diminish, and contentedness will be fortified, become stronger and robust.

97. सुमिरन सेवा राम सों साहब सों पहिचानि ।
ऐसेहु लाभ न ललक जो तुलसी नित हित हानि ।।

Remembrance of Lord Ram, being fortunate enough to serve Lord Ram, and recognising Lord Ram's essential nature and form (as being a personified form of the majestic, almighty, all-encompassing and all-pervading Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, and the only Truth of creation)—Tulsidas says that those who are not eager to have such a fruit in life are surely destined for doom and loss of every benefit of taking birth in this world. [That is, if one spends his life in pursuing worldly gains and pecuniary benefits but does not devote his time in remembering the Lord or serving him, or striving to acquire knowledge of the truth of the Supreme Being—then surely such people are fools who barter superior rewards for useless things. Such people are bad traders and cannot profit by taking birth as a human being like a business-man who fails in life because he is poor at making profitable bargains and deals.]

98. जानें जानन जोइऐ बिनु जाने को जान ।
तुलसी यह सुनि समुझि हियँ आनु धरें धनु बान ।।

When we start a quest to know someone then only can we know the facts and details about him. Tulsidas says keeping this in mind, try to bring the bow-and-arrow bearing Sri Ram in your heart (i.e. meditate on his form), and gradually you'll realise his true nature and divine form as being Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified.

99. करमठ कठमलिया कहैं ग्यानी ग्यान बिहीन ।
तुलसी त्रिपथ बिहाइ गो राम दुआरें दीन ।।

Tulsidas says that experts (in Vedas) condemn me as one who wears a worthless wooden rosary around my neck, wise men say I am a dud or an idiot, and I don't know how to meditate. I have stopped bothering myself about all the three—for I have taken refuge as a humble wretch at the doorstep of Sri Ram (i.e. at his feet).

[By taking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram, Tulsidas says that he is rest assured of protection from the Lord, and his liberation and deliverance are ensured, though the people of the world call him a stupid man who is ignorant of the scriptures and who does not know how to do Yoga. Therefore, from their view-point, the fate of Tulsidas is doomed, but he says that he believes to the contrary—for he has taken shelter in the holy feet of Lord Ram, and therefore his emancipation and salvation is taken care of.]

100. बाधक सब सब के भए साधक भए न कोइ ।
तुलसी राम कृपालु ते भलो होइ सो होइ ॥

Tulsidas says that in this world all people cause hindrances and obstacles; there is no one who sincerely extends a helping hand. Whatever well-being that is at all possible can be expected only from Lord Ram. [That is, in this selfish world, a man's true friend is Lord Ram and no one else.]

102. बिलग बिलग सुख संग दुख जनम मरन सोइ रीति ।
रहिअत राखे राम के गए ते उचित अनीति ॥

True happiness is in keeping a distance (i.e. to remain detached) from the mundane world, and miseries are in doing the opposite. The same thing applies to life and death. One must live life devoid of all worldly attachments, and consider it to be a gift or largesse from the supreme Lord Sri Ram. Otherwise it would be better to die.

[In short, it is better to die than to live a life of worldly indulgences and remaining entangled in various attachments. This is because the longer a man remains indulgent and attached to this world, the greater and more robust would be the entanglement and its attendant burden of deeds and their consequences that would dog him after death. If he dies early, then lesser would be such a burden to carry forward to the next life after death. The longer the entanglement in this world the stronger and more profound would be the miseries and agonies that this world creates for the creature. In his attempt at finding peace, happiness and comfort which constantly evade him in this world, he gets sucked deeper and deeper in the whirlpool or cesspool represented by more desires and unrequited yearnings.]

103. जायँ कहब करतूति बिनु जायँ जोग बिन छेम ।
तुलसी जायँ उपाय सब बिना राम पद प्रेम ॥

Promises and preaching without relevant and complimentary actions to support them are as useless as acquiring unattainable and unobtainable rare objects without being capable of protecting those already possessed. Tulsidas says that similarly, all ways and means are in vain without having faith and devotion in the holy feet of Lord Ram.

104. लोग मगन सब जोगहीं जोग जायँ बिनु छेम ।
त्योँ तुलसीके भावगत राम प्रेम बिनु नेम ॥

All the people are totally absorbed in the acquisition of difficult, rare-to-find objects, but it is in vain without first being able to protect that which is already possessed. According to Tulsidas, all ways and means are similarly useless without having faith and devotion for Lord Ram.

105. राम निकाई रावरी है सबही को नीक ।
जौँ यह साँची है सदा तौ नीको तुलसीक ॥

Tulsidas says, 'Oh Sri Ram! Your benevolent nature is beneficial for all. If this is true, then Tulsidas shall always have his welfare assured.'

106. तुलसी राम जो आदर्यो खोटो खरो खरोइ ।
दीपक काजर सिर धर्यो धर्यो सुधर्यो धरोइ ॥

Tulsidas says that those who have been accepted by Lord Ram (i.e. acknowledged by Ram as being his devotee) are deemed to be good whether they are so or not. When the lamp has accepted the soot as its cap, there is nothing that others can say or do about it.

[When an oil lamp with a burning wick is covered partially on top by a shade, soot collects on the inside of this cover. It appears to cap the lamp. Though black, oily and useless otherwise, it is nevertheless used by mothers as a charm against evil spirits by putting it as a dot on the forehead of infants and children. So it becomes valuable. Tulsidas says that likewise, once he has been accepted as a humble follower or devotee by the Lord, then howsoever useless he might be, he is rendered valuable and respected by all in this world.]

107. तनु बिचित्र कायर बचन अहि अहार मन घोर ।
तुलसी हरि भए पच्छधर ताते कह सब मोर ॥

A peacock has a multi coloured body (i.e. the plume) and ugly looking legs, its voice is like a coward (because it screams), its food consists of serpents, and its mind is stern and emotionless. In spite of all the shortcomings it possesses, Sri Krishna has used its plume to adorn his head (as a decorative head-gear). Since Sri Krishna favoured it, everyone calls the bird "Mor-Mor" (literally meaning 'my-my', or everyone wants to own it).

[Tulsidas means that once the Lord accepts even the lowliest and the most condemned of creatures, the latter begins to get honour and fame in the world. So it is always wise and prudent to be in the favourable looks of the Lord if one wants to acquire respect and acclaim in this world. Or the Lord is so magnanimous, merciful, kind and gracious that he accepts those who are condemned by the world, and the Lord lifts them to a high pedestal of respect and fame.]

108. लहइ न फूटी कौड़िहू को चाहै केहि काज ।
सो तुलसी महँगो कियो राम गरीब निवाज ॥

Tulsidas reminisces about his earlier days of poverty and depravation, and says that he, who had no reputation or dignity, who could not get even a single coin as alm, and was avoided or shunned by everyone, has now become respected and is much in demand, thanks to the grace, mercy and benediction of Lord Ram who is the sustainer of the hapless.

109. घर घर माँगे टूक पुनि भूपति पूजे पाय ।
जे तुलसी तब राम बिनु ते अब राम सहाय ॥

Tulsidas says that earlier in life, when he was not acquainted with (i.e. unknown to) Lord Ram, he had to search every household for each morsel of food. Now that Lord Ram has become his helper (i.e. friend, sustainer, patron, benefactor and protector), even kings worship his feet (i.e. he has become worthy and respected).

110. तुलसी राम सुदीठि तें निबल होत बलवान ।
बैर बालि सुग्रीव कें कहा कियो हनुमान ॥

Tulsidas says that the benevolent view of Lord Ram can turn a weak and helpless into a strong and resourceful person. In the animosity between Sugriv and Bali (which ultimately resulted in Lord Ram killing Bali and making Sugriv the king of Kiskindha), Hanuman had no role to play (but he got the credit for Sugriv's coronation, and Sugriv became a great warrior by defeating Bali).

111. तुलसी रामहु तें अधिक राम भगत जियँ जान ।
रिनिया राजा राम भे धनिक भए हनुमान ॥

Tulsidas advises that a devotee of Lord Ram should be regarded in higher esteem than the Lord himself. The Emperor Sri Ram said himself that he would be unable to repay the debts he owed to Hanuman.

112. कियो सुसेवक धरम कपि प्रभु कृतग्य जियँ जानि ।
जोरि हाथ ठाढ़े भए बरदायक बरदानि ॥

Hanuman did nothing exceptional except his duty as a faithful, loyal, obedient and good servant (of Lord Ram). But this knowledge made Lord Shiva submit himself before Hanuman so much so that the Lord stood before him with folded hands. [Lord Shiva can give boons even to Gods वरदाता वरदानी, but he felt humble in front of Hanuman].

113. भगत हेतु भगवान प्रभु राम धरेउ तनु भूप ।
किए चरित पावन परम प्राकृत नर अनुरूप ॥

The Lord of the Universe, Lord Ram, manifested himself in a human body for the benefit of his devotees, and performed ordinary tasks like a normal person.

114. ग्यान गिरा गोतीत अज माया मन गुन पार ।
सोइ सच्चिदानन्दघन कर नर चरित उदार ॥

He, who is beyond knowledge, speech and perception by the senses, who is un-born, who is free from delusions, who is beyond the reach of the mind, and who is without any specific attributes (i.e. who cannot be defined)—he is the same Lord known as ‘Sacchidanand’ who performs activities like an ordinary human being. [The word ‘Sacchidanand’ a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness.]

115. हिरन्याच्छ भ्राता सहित मधु कैटभ बलवान ।
जेहिं मारे सोइ अवतरेउ कृपासिंधु भगवान ॥

The most merciful Lord who is like an ocean of benediction, who is called Bhagwan (Supreme Lord; God), who slayed the demons Hiranya-Kasipu and Hiranyaaksha in addition to the strong and powerful demons named Madhu and Kaitav—he is the Lord who has manifested himself in the physical form of Lord Ram.

116. सुद्ध सच्चिदानंदमय कंद भानुकुल केतु ।
चरित करत नर अनुहरत संसृति सागर सेतु ॥

Lord Ram, who is the root of supreme and eternal bliss, who is most pure (devoid of faults created by all sorts of delusions associated with this creation), and who is the flag-bearer of the fame of Solar race—it is the same Lord who performs deeds like a normal human being. The singing and hearing of these divine acts of the Lord become a bridge to help the creature (the Lord’s devotee) to cross the ocean represented by this mundane world.

126. बारि मथें घृत होइ बरु सिकता ते बरु तेल ।
बिनु हरि भजन न भव तरिअ यह सिद्धान्त अपेल ॥

Butter may be produced by churning water or oil may be extracted from sand, but it is an infallible rule that it is impossible to cross the ocean of worldly existence without having faith in, devotion for and submission to Lord Ram.

127. हरि माया कृत दोष गुन बिनु हरि भजन न जाहिं ।
भजिअ राम सब काम तजि अस बिचारि मन माहिं ॥

The illusion of something being good and something being bad in this world is a delusion created by Maya of Lord Hari (Vishnu). It can only be eliminated by invoking the Lord's mercy and grace, which in turn is possible only when one has devotion and faith in the Lord. A wise man should understand this and abandon all sorts of desires and wants, and instead develop devotion and faith in Lord Ram.

128. जो चेतन कहँ जड़ करइ जड़हि करइ चैतन्य ।
अस समर्थ रघुनायकहि भजहिं जीव ते धन्य ॥

Those who worship Lord Ram—who has the mystical power to make something that is animate into something inanimate and vice-versa—are fortunate, privileged and blessed.

129. श्रीरघुबीर प्रताप ते सिंधु तरे पाषाण ।
ते मतिमंद जे राम तजि भजहिं जाइ प्रभु आन ॥

By the glory and effect of Raghubir, the brave king of Raghu's dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram), even stones and boulders floated on the water of the ocean (during construction of the bridge to cross over to Lanka). Therefore, surely one is un-wise and an idiot if he abandons such a Lord and worship others.

[If dead rocks can float on the water of the ocean by the grace of Lord Ram, then getting across the ocean represented by this mundane world, and getting liberation and deliverance for the soul from its fetters, is also possible if one relies faithfully and exclusively on the powers of the divine name of the Lord, and has devotion for him.]

130. लव निमेष परमानु जुग बरस कलप सर चंड ।
भजसि न मन तेहि राम कहँ कालु जासु कोदंड ॥

'Oh mind! Why don't you worship Lord Ram whose bow resembles Kaal (the time factor), and the arrows are like the various divisions (fractions) of time such as Parmanu

(time taken by light to pass through an atom), a twinkling (fraction of a second), a moment, a year, an age (an era) or a cycle (of birth and death).'

131. तब लागि कुसल न जीव कहूँ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।
जब लागि भजत न राम कहूँ सोकधाम तजि काम ॥

Unless this soul abandons desires, which are the cause of all unhappiness, and worship Lord Ram instead, till that time it can neither expect any welfare nor have any peace of mind even in its dream.

132. बिनु सतसंग न हरिकथा तेहि बिनु मोह न भाग ।
मोह गएँ बिनु रामपद होइ न दृढ़ अनुराग ॥

Without Satsang (communion with saints) it is not possible to hear divine stories of the Lord; without hearing such stories, worldly attachments don't leave; and without destroying attachments, one can't have abiding love (i.e. devotion) in the holy feet of Lord Ram.

133. बिनु बिस्वास भगति नहिं तेहि बिनु द्रवहिं न रामु ।
राम कृपा बिनु सपनेहुँ जीव न लह बिश्रामु ॥

Without having abiding faith and devotion towards the Lord, one can't worship him; without devotion and worship, Lord Ram cannot be pleased, and without Lord Ram's blessings and benevolence, one can't have peace even in one's dream.

134. अस बिचारि मतिधीर तजि कुतर्क संसय सकल ।
भजहु राम रघुबीर करुनाकर सुंदर सुखद ॥

'Oh One with a stable mind! Thinking thus (i.e. considering what has been said in foregoing verses) and abandoning all deceit, doubts and debates, you should worship Lord Ram who is a mine of mercy and compassion, who has a most beautiful and divine form, and who is a bestower of supreme bliss'.

135. भाव बस्य भगवान सुख निधान करुना भवन ।
तजि ममता मद मान भजिअ सदा सीता रवन ॥

The Lord, who is a treasury of happiness and abode of compassion and mercy, can be controlled (i.e. influenced) only by emotions of love and devotion. Therefore, one should abandon all sorts of worldly attachments, ego, pride and vanity, and instead worship Lord Ram always.

136. कहहिं बिमलमति संत बेद पुरान बिचारि अस ।
द्रवहिं जानकी कंत तब छूटै संसार दुख ॥

Saints who are wise and have an uncorrupt mind give the following advice, after having consulted the Vedas and the Purans—that a person can get rid of the sorrows of the world only when Lord Ram becomes benevolent and favourable upon him.

137. बिनु गुर होइ कि ग्यान ग्यान कि होइ बिराग बिनु ।
गावहिं बेद पुरान सुख कि लहिअ हरि भगति बिनु ॥

Is it ever possible to attain spiritual wisdom without (the help and guidance of) a Guru (a wise teacher), and similarly is it ever possible to have such wisdom without inculcating the eclectic virtue of renunciation? [That is, it is not possible that either can happen.]

The Vedas and the Purans assert that likewise it is not possible to have true peace, comfort and happiness without having devotion and faith in Lord Hari.

138. रामचंद्र के भजन बिनु जो चह पद निर्बान ।
ग्यानवंत अपि सो नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषान ॥

A person who expects salvation without worshipping Sri Ramchandra is like an animal without a horn or tail (i.e. deformed, in breach of the law of nature, and anomalous).

[Even as an animal would look odd and deformed if it does not have the characteristic features of an ordinary animal, such as having a tail or a horn, a person who has no devotion for Lord Ram and expects his salvation is an odd person because his thoughts and expectations are unconventional and impossible to achieve.]

139. जरउ सो संपति सदन सुखु सुहृद मातु पितु भाइ ।
सनमुख होत जो रामपद करइ न सहस सहाइ ॥

Those assets such as wealth, home, happiness, friends, parents, brothers etc. should perish which do not aid and help a person to willingly turn towards Lord Ram's holy feet.

140. सेइ साधु गुरु समुझि सिखि राम भगति थिरताइ ।
लरिकाई को पैरिबो तुलसी बिसरि न जाइ ॥

Understand and learn the essence (i.e. the fundamental true nature and divine form) of Lord Ram from true saints and wise teachers. It is only then that one can expect to have stable and unwavering faith and devotion towards him because one who learns how to swim during childhood never forgets it in life.

[When a student understands the basic concept that governs some formula and grasps the fundamental principles of any given concept of science and mathematics, he will be able to solve any problem by applying this basic formula and concept with due logic and intelligence. But if the fundamental concept is not clear to him and he has just learnt by rote merely to pass the school examination, then even a slight variation from what he has learnt by heart from the text book without understanding its concept would leave him tongue-tied, perplexed and flummoxed. Similarly, when one fully understands the true divine nature and form of Lord Ram as being the incarnate form of the Supreme Being, the reason why this Supreme Being had to take the form of a human being, and the essential teachings of the scriptures about the universality of the Consciousness called the Atma and such other related principles, then surely he would not be bewildered by the worldly activities of Lord Ram. He would then find it extremely easy to avoid confusions and distractions, and be able to have steady faith, devotion and love for the Lord instead.]

150. सेवा सील सनेह बस करि परिहरि प्रिय लोग ।
तुलसी ते सब राम सों सुखद सँजोग बियोग ॥

Tulsidas advises that one should abandon attachments with kins and other worldly relations, and instead try to keep Lord Ram under his sway or influence by inculcating the eclectic virtues of love, devotion, worship and good conduct. By doing so, every circumstance would become favourable for him.

[This is because all worldly relationships are based on self-interest. Two persons keep contact with one another only as long as this helps both of them satisfy their personal agenda and fulfill their needs and desires. Otherwise they would either break this relationship or develop coolness. Worldly bonds are tentative and selfish. Even if they last a lifetime, they will snap with death. But this does not apply to the Lord. He is merciful, kind, benevolent, munificent and graceful to the extreme. He knows only to give and never to take. He cares for his devotees not only in this life but also ensures for his well-being in the life after death by providing his soul with liberation and deliverance. So if a person only has love for the Lord and calls out to him sincerely, the Lord is all out to help him in all possible way that is beyond his expectations and imaginations. Again, since all creatures are mortal and would die one day, a person is bound to suffer the agony of parting or separation with such death, but this does not apply to the Lord as he is eternal and omnipresent. Then again, all human beings have their limitations of strength, power and abilities, so the help they can extend to their kith and kin is also limited. But Lord Ram is unlike them because he had limitless and infinite powers, strength and abilities as he is the Supreme Being personified. So why not bargain for the best?].

151. चारि चहत मानस अगम चनक चारि को लाहु ।
चारि परिहरें चारि को दानि चारि चख चाहु ॥

A man wants the four legendary rewards or fruits known as Kaam (fulfilment of desires), Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness and its attendant fame and honour) and Moksha

(salvation of soul)—but all these are difficult to attain and not easily accessible. In their pursuit a man spends his whole life, but he gets four grains of gram.

[That is, inspite of making all efforts, one may be successful in getting one or the other rewards, and even all the four, but only a fraction of what he had wanted and expected to obtain. The ‘four grains of gram’ is a figure of speech to mean only a miniscule fraction of what is desired or aspired for.]

Therefore it is wise to discard yearnings for such inconsequential gains, and instead of wasting time and energy by looking intently for small pieces of scattered grains (worldly rewards) one should rather focus one’s sight using all his four eyes—two external eyes of the body and two internal eyes represented by the Mana or mind and Buddhi or intellect—upon the supreme Giver, Lord Ram, who can bestow all the fruits and rewards one seeks even without his asking for them.

152. सूधे मन सूधे बचन सूधी सब करतूति ।
तुलसी सूधी सकल बिधि रघुबर प्रेम प्रसूति ॥

Those who have a simple, straightforward, uncorrupt and unprentious heart, mind, speech and action (i.e. those who do not have any deceit and conceit), for them all means by which love and devotion for Lord Ram can be ignited become extremely simple and easily available.

[That is, the best way to develop devotion and love for the Lord is to have a simple and humble heart and mind that is free from deceit and all sorts of worldly corruptions.]

187. मुकुर निरखि मुख राम भ्रू गनत गुनहि दै दोष ।
तुलसी से सठ सेवकन्हि लखि जनि परहिं सरोष ॥

When Lord Ram watches his face in a mirror, he sees the bow-like curvature of his eyebrows, and wonders if servants (followers, devotees) like Tulsidas, who are rascals and scoundrels, would be scared on seeing them, thinking that Lord Ram is angry at them – i.e. the Lord does not want any part or posture of his body to frighten his devotees by depicting anger or grimace of any manner.

[In other words, the Lord is so careful in his demeanours and behaviour, his deeds and actions that they should never offend his devotees in the least. The Lord’s form should be attracting and not repelling. The devotee must feel free to say anything he likes to the Lord without fear.]

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Section-2/Part-3

Barvai Ramayan

{The Barvai Ramyan is a short composition of Goswami Tulsidas, consisting of only 69 two line verses. Out of them, verse nos. 45 to 69 describe the glory of Lord Ram's divine Name. In these verses, Tulsidas urges his mind, intellect and heart to remain submerged in the thoughts of the divine Lord Ram and his holy Name as a means of finding all-round spiritual welfare as well as peace and happiness. We will now read all of them here.}

स्वारथ परमारथ हित एक उपाय ।
सीय राम पद तुलसी प्रेम बढ़ाय ॥45॥

45-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! For serving worldly self-interests known as 'Swaarath', as well as attaining emancipation and salvation of soul known as 'Parmaarath', there is only one way—and that is to enhance love and devotion in the holy feet of Sita and Ram.'

काल कराल बिलोकहु होइ सचेत ।
राम नाम जपु तुलसी प्रीति समेत ॥46॥

46-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! Be careful and vigilant that the terrible Kaal (death) is visible (imminent, can happen any time). So, repeat and chant Sri Ram's holy name constantly with love, faith and devotion.'

संकट सोच बिमोचन मंगल गेह ।
तुलसी राम नाम पर करिय सनेह ॥47॥

47-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! One should have affection, abiding love, conviction towards and devotion for Sri Ram's holy name which is the destroyer (eliminator) of all types of sorrows, miseries, grief and gloom, and it is an abode (treasury) of all auspiciousness, welfare and well-being.'

कलि नहिं ग्यान बिराग न जोग समाधि ।
राम नाम जपु तुलसी नित निरुपाधि ॥48॥

48-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! During Kaliyug, it is not possible to have Gyan (wisdom, erudition and knowledge of the essential universal truths) or Vairagya (detachment, renunciation from the material world), and neither is it possible to

do Yoga (meditative practices and contemplation) nor attain Samadhi (a trance-like state of consciousness where one loses awareness of the external world and is submerged in eternal bliss). Therefore, (the only easily available way is to) chant and remember Lord Ram's holy name constantly'.

राम नाम दुइ आखर हियँ हितु जान ।
राम लखन सम तुलसी सिखब न आन ॥49॥

49-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! Regard the two letters (RA and MA) of Lord Ram's holy name as representing Lord Sri Ram and Laxman (his brother) respectively, and do not allow any other advice to find place in your heart (or mislead you)'.

माय बाप गुरु स्वामि राम कर नाम ।
तुलसी जेहि न सोहाइ ताहि बिधि बाम ॥50॥

50-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! Lord Ram's holy name is akin to a father, a mother, a Guru and a Lord for you. Those who do not like this (advice) have the creator opposed, or malignant, or malicious towards them (i.e. such people can never hope of deliverance from this cycle of birth and death)'.

राम नाम जपु तुलसी होइ बिसोक ।
लोक सकल कल्याण नीक परलोक ॥51॥

51-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! Recite Lord Ram's holy name and be free from all sorrows and worries. This will result in all types of welfare in this world as well as the 'other world' for you.' [Here he means that one will get emancipation and liberation of soul from the shackles of the cycle of birth and death if one constantly remembers the Lord and repeats his holy name.]

तप तीरथ मख दान नेम उपबास ।
सब ते अधिक राम जपु तुलसीदास ॥52॥

52-Tulsidas says—'Oh My mind, intellect and heart! Recite the name of Lord Ram which is superior in (providing spiritual) rewards as compared to the cumulative benefits of Tapa (austerities, penances), Tirath (pilgrimage), Makh (various Yagyas or fire sacrifices and other religious rituals), Daan (making charity), Nem (following established rules and procedures), and Upwaas (fasting)'.

महिमा राम नाम कै जान महेस ।
देत परम पद कासीं करि उपदेस ।।53।।

53-Lord Shiva knows the potential powers, the astounding glories, the great fame and the grand eclectic virtues of Lord Ram's holy name, for he gives this (advice of repeating and relying on the name of Lord Sri Ram) to a dying person at Kashi (Varanasi). [It is believed that when a man dies in Varanasi, also known as Kashi, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva and a famed pilgrim city of India, Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Sri Ram, i.e. the word 'RAM', in his ears. This immediately unshackles the dying man's soul from the fetters of his sins and provides the man with liberation and deliverance. This is called 'Mukti'.]

जान आदि कबि तुलसी नाम प्रभाउ ।
उलटा जपत कोल ते भए रिषि राउ ।।54।।

54-Tulsidas says that the ancient poet Valmiki had known the potential effects of Lord Ram's divine name because by chanting it in the reverse order (as Mara instead of Ram) he had transformed himself from a cruel Kol (a tribal hunter) into an exalted sage.

[Valmiki is the sage who had first written the divine story of Lord Ram that came to known as the famous epic 'Ramayan'. He was also the sage in whose hermitage Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram, had spent her last days in exile where the Lord's two sons Lav and Kush were born. He was a cruel hunter, but one day he was advised by sages Sankaadi that no one would share the burden of sins and their horrifying consequences that he is accumulating for himself. Asked for a way out, the sages told him to do meditation using Lord Ram's holy name. Valmiki replied that he is so sinful that he cannot do that, so the sages told him to repeat the holy name in the reverse order. By obeying their advice, Valmiki attained enlightenment.]

कलसजोनि जियँ जानेउ नाम प्रतापु ।
कौतुक सागर सोखेउ करि जियँ जापु ।।55।।

55-Sage Agastya had realised the glory and potent of Lord Ram's holy name in his heart, for he had invoked it, and on its strength, had dried up the ocean playfully (without the least effort).

[Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vashistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj,

because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them. Some of the demons however managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.]

तुलसी सुमिरत राम सुलभ फल चारि ।
बेद पुरान पुकारत कहत पुरारि ॥56॥

56-Tulsidas says that the four fruits (Artha, Dharma, Kaam, Moksha) are easily available by merely remembering Sri Ram's holy name. This fact is asserted loudly (proclaimed) by the Vedas as well as endorsed by Lord Shiva.

[Note—The four fruits of good deeds are the following—‘Artha’ or material prosperity and wealth; ‘Dharma’ or acquisition of the virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety; ‘Kaam’ or fulfillment of desires; and ‘Moksha’ or spiritual emancipation and deliverance.]

राम नाम पर तुलसी नेह निबाहु ।
एहि ते अधिक न एहि सम जीवन लाहु ॥57॥

57-Tulsidas says that one should have abiding endearment, love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram's holy name. What to talk of being greater than this reward, no other benefit or reward can become even equal to it in this world.

दोस दुरित दुख दारिद दाहक नाम ।
सकल सुमंगल दायक तुलसी राम ॥58॥

58-Tulsidas says that Lord Ram's holy name can, on the one hand, burn (destroy or eliminate) all faults, sins, sorrows, miseries, wants and poverties that torment the person, and on the other hand it can bestow all auspiciousness, goodness, good fortunes, welfare and well-being that exist in this world.

केहि गिनती मह गिनती जस बन घास ।
राम जपत भए तुलसी तुलसीदास ॥59॥

59-[Talking about himself and his past, Tulsidas says—] 'What did I count and what was my standing in the society? My condition was like the forest grass (uncared for, trampled upon, and worthless). But by chanting (reciting or constantly remembering) Lord Sri Ram's divine name, I have become as pure, revered and exalted as the Tulsi (Basil) plant'.

[Note—The Tulsi plant is much respected in India as it is a sacred plant because it is dear to Lord Vishnu. In this verse, Tulsidas is playing with the word 'Tulsi' in his name. Earlier in life, the saint had to suffer a lot, having to beg for even basic meals. But when he started relying on the Lord's holy name 'Ram' he became very famous even during his lifetime.]

आगम निगम पुरान कहत करि लीक ।
तुलसी राम नाम कर सुमिरन नीक ॥60॥

60-Tulsidas says that the Aagam (Tantra Shastra), Nigam (Vedas) and Purans (ancient mythological histories of India) have drawn a line (i.e. underlined, highlighted, and have positively proclaimed and asserted) that remembering Lord Ram's holy name is the best path of all to be followed in this world.

सुमिरहु नाम राम कर सेवहु साधु ।
तुलसी उतरि जाहु भव उदधि अगाधु ॥61॥

61-Tulsidas advises that one should constantly remember Lord Sri Ram's holy name, and serve holy, pious and righteous people. In this way one can easily get to the other side of

the 'Bhavsagar' (the mundane, deluding and entrapping world consisting of the cycle of birth and death which is as vast and un-crossable as the ocean).

कामधेनु हरि नाम कामतरु राम ।
तुलसी सुलभ चारि फल सुमिरत नाम ॥62॥

62-Tulsidas says that the name of Lord Ram is like a (all wish fulfilling) Kamdhenu cow, while his form is akin to the Kalpa Tree. Merely by constantly remembering Lord Ram's holy name, all the four fruits (Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) are easily accessible.

[Note—The 'Kamdhenu cow' is the cow of Gods. It is believed that by serving it one can be blessed with all the things he desires. The 'Kalpa Tree' is similarly a wish fulfilling tree of the Gods. The 'four fruits' have been described in verse no. 56.]

तुलसी कहत सुनत सब समुझत कोय ।
बड़े भाग अनुराग राम सन होय ॥63॥

63-Tulsidas says that everyone talks about worshipping Lord Ram and having love, devotion, faith and dedication for the Lord, but rarely does anyone implement it (or understand it). Love and devotion for Sri Ram germinates (or arises) in one's heart only when one is very fortunate and lucky.

[It is only when all the accumulated good deeds done by a man begin to show their results that he is inspired to worship the Lord and have devotion for him. If it does happen then that man is extremely lucky and fortunate.]

एकहि एक सिखावत जपत न आप ।
तुलसी राम प्रेम कर बाधक पाप ॥64॥

64-People teach others to recite Lord Ram's holy name but they do not do it themselves. Tulsidas says that their sins and past evil deeds create hindrance or obstacles for them (i.e. prevent them from chanting this holy mantra).

मरत कहत सब सब कहँ सुमिरहु राम ।
तुलसी अब नहिं जपत समुझि परिनाम ॥65॥

65-Tulsidas says that when a person is about to die, all advise him to say Lord Ram's holy name, but the irony is that they don't do it themselves while they are still alive.

तुलसी राम नाम जपु आलस छोडु ।
राम बिमुख कलि काल को भयो न भाँडु ।।66 ।।

66-Tulsidas advises that one should discard indolence, lethargy and laxity, and instead be vigilant in repeating Lord Ram's holy name constantly. By being opposed to Lord Ram, who has not been made to wander aimlessly (like a vagrant or a vagabond) in this world?

[A person who does not have faith and love for Lord Ram is like a child without a parent, or a man without an identity or a nationality. He is like a ship without a captain or an anchor.]

तुलसी राम नाम सम मित्र न आन ।
जो पहुँचाव राम पुर तनु अवसान ।।67 ।।

67-Tulsidas says that there is no other better friend for a person than Lord Sri Ram's holy name which can ferry the soul to the abode of the Lord at the time of the person's death (and liberate him from the cycle of birth and death).

राम भरोस नाम बल नाम सनेहु ।
जनम जनम रघुनंदन तुलसी देहु ।।68 ।।

68-[Praying to Lord Sri Ram, Tulsidas says—] 'Oh Raghunandan (Lord Sri Ram)! Give this Tulsidas the assurance that he will get your personal support and protection, and the support and protection of your holy and divine name 'Ram', along with having an abiding love and devotion in both (the Lord himself as well as his holy name) in all the future births that he (Tulsidas) might have to take.'

[Note—The word 'Raghunandan' literally means the son of king Raghu's dynasty. This title is applied to Lord Ram because he was born in this dynasty which ruled the ancient kingdom of Ayodhya.]

जनम जनम जहँ जहँ तनु तुलसिहि देहु ।
तहँ तहँ राम निबाहिब नाथ सनेहु ।।69 ।।

69-'In whichever form you (i.e. the Supreme Creator, Lord Ram) make this Tulsidas take birth again in this world, I beseech you most earnestly oh Lord that you should uphold your promise of having love, endearment and affection for me for all times to come, and therefore make sure that I have your benevolence and love in the new life the way it is in this life.'

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Section-2/Part-4

Kavitawali

{In this part we shall see what Tulsidas says in Kavitawali while describing the glories and divine nature of Lord Ram and His Holy Name. For this purpose we shall select verses from Uttar Kand. These verses are verse nos. 1-125.}

Kavitawali: Uttar Kand—

बालि-सो बीरु बिदारि सुकंठु, थप्यो, हरषे सुर बाजने बाजे ।
पलमें दल्यो दासर्थी दसकंधरु, लंक बिभीषनु राज बिराजे ॥
राम सुभाउ सुनें 'तुलसी' हुलसै अलसी हम-से गलगाजे ॥
कायर कूर कपूतनकी हद, तेउ गरीबनेवाज नेवाजे ॥१॥

1-After slaying a brave warrior like Bali, Lord Ram gave Sugriv the kingdom (of Kishkindha). The Gods were extremely happy at this and played musical instruments (to celebrate). The son of Dasrath (Lord Ram) killed the demon Ravana in a short time, and Vibhashan adorned the throne of Lanka (in his place).

Tulsidas says that on hearing the natural temperament, inclinations and benevolent character of Lord Ram, lazy and indolent people like me feel reassured and brag (that they have nothing to worry about any more). Even those who were extremely coward, cruel and unworthy were blessed by Lord Ram and benefited by the Lord's mercy, grace, munificence and benevolence.

बेद पढ़ें बिधि, संभुसभीत पुजावन रावनसों नितु आवैं ।
दानव देव दयावने दीन दुखी दिन दूरिहि तें सिरु नावैं ॥
ऐसेउ भाग भगे दसभाल तें जो प्रभुता कबि-कोबिद गावैं ।
रामसे बाम भाँ तेहि बामहि बाम सबै सुख संपति लावैं ॥२॥

2-Brahma (the creator) used to come personally daily to recite the Vedas in the court of Ravana; Lord Shiva came to accept offerings and prayers daily out of his fear; and all the demons and the Gods bowed their heads to him from a distance with great humility and meekness and as if they were wretched and fit for mercy because they were all terrified of him and did not want to incur his wrath. When Ravana opposed Lord Ram, even luck abandoned and ran away from the same Ravana whose majesty, strength and powers were so famous and astounding that poets and bards never tired of singing his glories and laurels. Happiness, prosperity and welfare become opposed to (i.e. go against or abandon) a person who turns away from Lord Ram.

बेद बिरुद्ध मही, मुनि साधु ससोक किए सुरलोकु उजारो ।
और कहा कहौं, तीय हरी, तबहूँ करुनाकर कोपु न धारो ॥

सेवक-छोह तें छाड़ी छमा, तुलसी लख्यो राम ! सुभाउ तिहारो ।
तौलौ न दापु दल्यो दसकंधर, जौलौ बिभीषन लातु न मारो ॥३॥

3-Ravana, who behaved in manners proscribed and prohibited by the Vedas (i.e. an unrighteous behaviour), who had made the earth, sages and saints sorrowful, who had overrun and demolished the abode of Gods, and what more can be said, he even stole their women—still, inspite of all his sins, the merciful Lord Ram did not become angry at him. [That is, inspite of such horrors that Ravana created, the Lord made all efforts to avoid the war and give him a chance to amend himself. It was only when Ravana would not listen to any entreaties that he was finally eliminated. And even so the Lord ensured that his soul got emancipation and salvation instead of sending it to hell. This is proved by the fact that when Ravana died a bright effulgence of light emerged from his body and entered the body of Lord Ram—a visible sign of the individual Atma of Ravana entering and becoming one with the Supreme Atma represented by Lord Ram. This is the best destination and rest any soul can ever wish to have. It is a destiny for which great sages and saints yearn for but rarely ever achieve.]

Tulsidas says, 'Oh Sri Ram! I have come to understand your natural habit, temperament and inclinations. You had abandoned your nature of forgiveness for the sake of Vibhishan, because till the moment Ravana had kicked Vibhishan, you had not crushed his ego and pride (or decided to punish him by killing him).'

सोक समुद्र निमज्जत काढ़ि कपीसु कियो, जगु जानत जैसो ।
नीच निसाचर बैरि को बंधु बिभीषनु कीन्ह पुरंदर कैसो ॥
नाम लिउँ अपनाइ लियो तुलसी-सो, कहौ जग कौन अनैसो ।
आरत आरति भंजन रामु, गरीबनेवाज न दूसरो ऐसो ॥४॥

4-The whole world knows how you had saved Sugriv from being drowned in the ocean of sorrows and made him the king of the monkeys. You had made Vibhishan, the wretched demon and brother of your enemy, as famous and renowned as Indra (the king of Gods). Merely on the excuse of chanting your name, you had accepted (a worthless wretch like) Tulsidas, an evil one like whom is not to be found elsewhere in the world.

Tulsidas observes that Sri Ram is the only one to eliminate the sorrows of the distressed; there is no one like him in having mercy, grace, benediction and munificence towards the poor, the humble, the helpless, the hapless, and the wretched ones.

मीत पुनीत कियो कपि भालुको, पाल्यो ज्यों काहुँ न बाल तनूजो ।
सज्जन सीव बिभीषनु भो, अजहुँ बिलसै बर बंधुबधू जो ॥
कोसलपाल बिना 'तुलसी' सरनागतपाल कृपाल न दूजो ।
कूर, कुजाति, कुपूत, अघी, सबकी सुधरै, जो करै नरु पूजो ॥५॥

5-He (Lord Ram) had made friends of even monkeys and bears, and protected them more diligently than one would his infant son. Vibhishan, who being immortal has been unethically enjoying his elder brother's wife (Mandodari) even till now, but he became a bench-mark of saintliness (because he had taken refuge in the holy feet of the Lord).

Tulsidas says that there is no one more merciful and protector of those who surrender (or seek refuge) than (or compared to) the Lord of the Kaushal-clan (Lord Ram). Anyone who adores and worships him can get all welfare and good luck inspite of his being cruel, low-caste, un-worthy and sinful.

तीय सिरोमनि सीय तजी, जेहिं पावककी कलुषाई दही है।
 धर्मधुरंधर बंधु तज्यो, पुरलोगनिकी बिधि बोलि कही है॥
 कीस निसाचरकी करनी न सुनी, न बिलोकी, न चित्त रही है।
 राम सदा सरनागतकी अनखौही, अनैसी सुभायँ सही है॥६॥

6-Hearing that aspersions were cast on the character of the most pure and exalted Sita, he (Lord Ram) had even abandoned her who was so pure that she had burnt (destroyed, eliminated, overcome) the vicious nature of fire to burn everything put into it. [This refers to the incident when Sita had entered a burning fire at the end of the war at Lanka to prove her innocence. She emerged unscathed. This established on the one hand that she was immaculate, and at the same time it freed the fire from being eternally accused of being fierce, cruel and scorching because till that date anything that entered the fire was reduced to ashes.]

Not only this, the Lord had even abandoned his most obedient and rightful brother Laxman (to protect his vows and uphold the law of duty and propriety), and summoned the citizens and lectured them on Dharma (rule of conduct and righteousness). [This refers to the Lord abandoning Laxman in the final days of his worldly sojourn when sage Durvasa came visiting and was prevented by Laxman from meeting the Lord. The sage forced him to enter the private chamber of the Lord inspite of the vow of the Lord that he would kill anyone if he disturbed him while he was meeting Kaal, the god of death, who had come earlier than Durvasa and was in the middle of a meeting with Lord Ram when Laxman came in without permission. To uphold his vow, the Lord was obliged to abandon Laxman as abandoning someone who is most dear is equivalent to killing him.]

But inspite of being so strict in obeying the laws of proper conduct, the same Lord had overlooked the apparent misdeeds of monkeys (e.g. Sugriv) and demons (e.g. Vibhishan) that they enjoyed the wives of their own slain elder brothers (Bali and Ravana respectively). In this way, Lord Ram has naturally tolerated, with a sense of forbearance and forgiveness, all the mischief, the misdemeanours and the misdeeds of those who have taken his protection and refuge (because he is so magnanimous, benevolent, merciful, obliging, kind and forgiving). [That is, the Lord could inflict punishment upon his own self by suffering from separation from his beloved brother Laxman who had served the Lord more than anyone else, not overlooking one single mistake Laxman had made, i.e. entering without permission, but the same Lord had pardoned or overlooked greater mistakes and unrighteous deeds of his devotees such as Sugriv and Vibhishan.]

अपराध अगाध भाँ जनतें, अपने उर आनत नाहिन जू।
 गनिका, गज, गीध, अजामिलके गनि पातकपुंज सिराहिं न जू॥
 लिउँ बारक नामु सुधामु दियो, जेहिं धाम महामुनि जाहिं न जू।
 तुलसी ! भजु दीनदयालहि रे ! रघुनाथ अनाथहि दाहिन जू॥७॥

7-You (Lord Ram) do not mind and pay attention to even great misdeeds or mistakes done by your servants (i.e. followers, devotees, subordinates etc.). The sins of Ganika (the prostitute), Gaj (the elephant), the Vulture (Jatau) and Ajaamil were innumerable, but they obtained that heavenly abode, which is too difficult to attain even by hermits and sages, by uttering your single name.

Tulsidas addresses himself and says, 'Oh Tulsi! Worship and constantly remember the Lord who is the most merciful and a gracious benefactor of the distressed, the destitute, the helpless and the hapless.'

प्रभु सत्य करी प्रह्लादगिरा, प्रगटे नरकेहरि खंभ महौ।
झषराज ग्रस्यो गजराजु, कृपा ततकाल बिलंबु कियो न तहाँ॥
सुर साखि दै राखी है पांडुबधू पट लूटत, कोटिक भूप जहाँ।
तुलसी ! भजु सोच-बिमोचनको, जनको पनु राम न राख्यो कहाँ॥१८॥

8- The Lord proved Prahalad correct when he manifested himself from the pillar (of the palace of his father, the demon Hiranaykashipu) in the form of Lord Narshingh (the Man-Lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu)¹. He showed his mercy instantly when the alligator had caught the foot of the elephant Gaja to pull him into the water to kill him. He protected Draupadi from being disrobed in front of thousands of kings (and preserved her dignity)², and made Gods witnesses to the event.

Tulsidas addresses himself saying, 'Oh Tulsidas, you must worship Lord Ram who can bail you out of your misfortunes and sorrows. Say, where has the Lord not honoured the promises and vows made by his devotees; where has the Lord not upheld the truthfulness of the words uttered by his devotees; where has the Lord not protected the self-respect and the dignity of his followers?'

[Note—¹The story of *Prahalad* is narrated in the Glossary in appendix no. 2 at the end of this book.

²*Draupadi*—The insult of Draupadi in full court was one of the main reasons why the devastating clan war of Mahabharat was fought between the Pandavas and the Kurus in the battle-field of Kurushetra. The Pandavas were five brothers, and the Kurus were a hundred. The Kurus had cheated the Pandavas in a game of dice, and after having lost everything as a wager, the unfortunate Pandavas betted their wife Draupadi, and they lost her too. Once in the open court, the Kuru king Duryodhan asked his brother Dusshaashan to disrobe her. When her Sari (a body wrapping garment worn by women in India) was being pulled out so that she could be made naked, Draupadi appealed to Lord Krishna to protect her. The Lord assumed the form of cloth. The sinful king pulled and pulled, and a huge mound of cloth gathered, but the Sari never seemed to end. In this way the dignity and self-respect of Draupadi was preserved by the Lord.]

नरनारि उघारि सभा महुँ होत दियो पटु, सोचु हस्यो मनको।
प्रह्लाद बिषाद-निवारन, बारन-तारन, मीत अकारनको॥
जो कहावत दीनदयाल सही, जेहि भारु सदा अपने पनको॥
'तुलसी' तजि आन भरोस भजें, भगवानु भलो करिहैं जनको॥१९॥

9-When Arjun's wife Draupadi was being disrobed in the full court of Kaurav king Duryodhan, he (Lord Krishna) gave her clothes (Sari) and removed the agony of her mind. He who eliminated the sorrows of Prahalad and protected Gaja (the elephant) is also a selfless friend and called a true benefactor of the distressed as he always

remembers his duties, words, responsibilities etc. towards them who have reposed their faith and trust in him.

Tulsidas says that if one relies solely on such a Lord, it is certain that the Lord will protect him fully.

रिषिनारि उधारि, कियो सठ केवटु मीतु पुनीत, सुकीर्ति लही।
निजलोकु दियो सबरी-खगको, कपि थाप्यो, सो मालुम है सबही॥
दससीस-बिरोध सभीत बिभीषनु भूपु कियो, जग लीक रही।
करुनानिधिको भजु, रे तुलसी! रघुनाथ अनाथके नाथु सही॥10॥

10-Lord Ram had provided liberation to sage Gautam's wife (Ahilya) and made Kewat (the boatman) pure by accepting him as a friend—thereby establishing his good name. He gave Sabari (the backward, tribal woman) and the vulture Jatayu his abode (in heaven), and established Sugriva on the throne (of Kishkindha) which is well known to all. He made Vibhishan, who was scared of Ravana, as a king (of Lanka) as a result of which he became renowned in the world.

Tulsidas says to himself— 'Oh Tulsidas! Worship Lord Ram who is a treasury of mercy and compassion, and a benevolent Lord who is a true well-wisher of the destitute, the distressed, the helpless and the hapless.'

कौसिक, बिप्रबधू मिथिलाधिपके सब सोच दले पल माहैं।
बालि-दसानन-बंधु-कथा सुनि, सत्रु सुसाहेब-सीलु सराहैं॥
ऐसी अनूप कहैं तुलसी रघुनायककी अगनी गुनगाहैं।
आरत, दीन, अनाथनको रघुनाथु करैं निज हाथकी छाहैं॥11॥

11-Lord Ram had instantly removed the worries of Kausik (sage Vishwamitra), the sage's wife (Ahilya), and king of Mithila (Janak). Hearing the story (and fate) of the brothers of Bali and Ravana (Sugriva and Vibhishan respectively), even enemies shower praises on the character and (benevolent, merciful, forgiving) natural temperament of our Lord Sri Ram. Tulsidas sings numerous such glories and famous tales of Lord Ram. He brings under the shadow of his out-stretched palms (like a protective umbrella) all those who are restless, distressed, wretched and destitute.

तेरे बेसाहें बेसाहत औरनि, और बेसाहिकै बेचनिहारे।
ब्योम, रसातल, भूमि भरे नृप कूर, कुसाहेब सैंतिहुँ खारे॥
'तुलसी' तेहि सेवत कौन मरै! रजतें लघुको करै मेरुतें भारे।
स्वामि सुसील समर्थ सुजान, सो तो-सो तुहीं दसरथ दुलारे॥12॥

12-'Once Lord Ram accepts someone, the latter is accepted by all others (i.e. all follow him like obedient followers). The acceptance by the Lord is an all-time affair—i.e. once the Lord accepts someone, he never abandons him. He is not like other Gods who are selfish in the sense that when their interest is fulfilled they would not demur or think twice before abandoning the person. In the whole world—in the heavens, on the earth and in the subterranean world—there are numerous cruel kings and wicked lords, but even if

they are available free of cost they are not worthy to be accepted as lords by anyone. Tulsidas says that it is futile and worthless to serve them.

Who can make the 'humblest-than-dust' servant greater than the huge mountain known as Mt. Sumeru except you oh Lord who is the courteous and graceful son of Dasrath (i.e. Lord Ram)? As a kind, compassionate, able and worthy Lord, you have no parallel; there is no one like you in the entire creation.'

जातुधान, भालु, कपि, केवट, बिहंग जो-जो
पाल्यो नाथ ! सद्य सो-सो भयो काम-काजको ।
आरत अनाथ दीन मलिन सरन आए,
राखे अपनाइ, सो सुभाउ महाराजको ।।
नामु तुलसी, पै भोंडो भाँग तें, कहायो दासु,
कियो अंगीकार ऐसे बड़े दगाबाजको ।
साहेबु समर्थ दसरथके दयालदेव !
दूसरो न तो-सो तुहीं आपनेकी लाजको ।।13 ।।

13-'Oh Lord! All those whom you accepted—such as the demons, bears, monkeys, boatman, birds (Jatau)—immediately became worthy from being worthless. Distressed, destitute, wretched, poor, evil-ones—all who sought your refuge were accepted by you. This is the benevolent nature and merciful character of the Lord (Sri Ram) that he accepts even the most unworthy and distressed, and immediately transforms them into someone who is exceptionally worthy and fortunate.

Tulsidas says—'Although my name is 'Tulsi' (a holy plant), but I am worse (more sinful) than 'Bhaang' (a hallucination producing herb called cannabis sativa). Once you accepted me as one of your own servants (followers or devotees), I was started being called by the name that has 'Das' as a suffix. [I am being called 'Tulsi+das = Tulsidas, literally meaning a servant or follower of a religious cult, system or Guru whose exalted name is Tulsi. 'Tulsi' is also very favourite of Lord Vishnu like the goddess Laxmi. Hence, I was blessed by Tulsi so much so that I became deemed to be her obedient servant, which in itself is a great fortune.]

You are so great that you have accepted a deceitful and cunning fellow like me! Oh Sri Ram! There is no able or kind master, or a merciful Lord like you; you are the only Lord who protects the dignity of those who have taken refuge with him. [In other words, other lords and masters tend to look down upon those humble and unfortunate people who have been forced to seek refuge with them due to their misfortunes, and these lords and masters tend to exploit their weakness and compulsions to serve their own vested interest, but you are so magnanimous and graceful that you give full respect and honour to such people and protect their dignity.]'

महाबली बालि दलि, कायर सुकंदु कपि
सखा किए महाराज ! हो न काहू कामको ।
भात-घात-पातकी निसाचर सरन आएँ,
कियो अंगीकार नाथ एते बड़े बामको ।।
राय, दसरथके ! समर्थ तेरे नाम लिएँ,
तुलसी-से कूरको कहत जगु रामको ।

आपने निवाजेकी तौ लाज महाराजको
सुभाउ, समुझत मनु मुदित गुलामको ।।14।।

14-‘Oh Lord! You had killed the very strong and valiant Bali and made the coward Sugriv, who was a stupid and worthless fellow, your friend. You had accepted the demon (Vibhishan) who had committed a grave sin of betraying his own elder brother (Ravana)—in spite of it being against the laws of Dharma (probity and righteous conduct)—when he came to seek your protection and refuge. Oh king Dasrath’s able and worthy son, Sri Ram! Considering your natural tendency and benevolent temperament to protect the dignity of those servants/subordinates who have sought your refuge, the mind and heart of your servant (i.e. Tulsidas) feels extremely exuberant, happy, ecstatic, exhilarant and delightful that he has chosen you as his Lord.’

रूप-सीलसिंधु, गुनसिंधु, बंधु दीनको,
दयानिधान, जानमनि, बीरबाहु-बोलको ।
स्राद्ध कियो गीधको, सराहे फल सबरीके
सिला-साप-समन, निबाह्यो नेहु कोलको ।।
तुलसी-उराउ होत रामको सुभाउ सुनि,
को न बलि जाइ, न बिकाइ बिनु मोलको ।
ऐसेहु सुसाहेबसों जाको अनुरागु न, सो
बड़ोई अभागो, भागु भागो लोभ-लोलको ।।15।।

15-Lord Ram is an ocean of beauty, good and noble character, sea of virtues, friend of the distressed, treasury of mercy, the best and most exalted amongst the wise, fearless in expressing himself, and peerless in the strength of his arms. He performed the last rites of a vulture (Jatau), praised the fruits offered to him by Sabari, vanquished the curse of Ahilya (who was turned into a stone), and showed affection towards Bhils (tribals or forest inhabitants).

Tulsidas says that one feels greatly encouraged and reassured on hearing the nature and temperament of Lord Ram. Who would not sacrifice (surrender) himself and feel sold-out at the hands of the Lord with such a great, noble and benevolent character! Those who have no attachment with and affection for such a Lord are indeed very unlucky, and (it appears that) luck has run away from (i.e. forsaken or abandoned) such a man who is swayed by selfish interests and greed.

सूरसिरताज, महाराजनि के महाराज,
जाको नामु लेतहीं सुखेतु होत ऊसरो ।
साहेबु कहाँ जहान जानकीसु सो सुजानु,
सुमिरैं कृपालुके मरालु होत खूसरो ।।
केवट, पषान, जातुधान, कपि-भालु तारे,
अपनायो तुलसी-सो धींग धमधूसरो ।
बोलको अटल, बाँहको पगारु, दीनबंधु,
दूबरेको दानी, को दयानिधान दूसरो ।।16।।

16-Who is a better Lord and Master in this world than Lord Ram who is the best amongst the brave and an Emperor of kings, by taking (i.e. remembering or invoking) whose name even the barren moor becomes a habitable and fertile land, and by remembering whom even an owl (i.e. an idiot) becomes a swan (a wise-one)? He (Lord Ram) gave salvation to Kewat, a stone (Ahilya), demons, monkeys and bears, and even accepted the wicked idiot like Tulsidas. Who is more trustworthy, a better protector of refuge-seekers (or subordinates, servants, followers), kin of those in sorrow, benefactor of the meek and weak, and a treasury (fount) of mercy, compassion and grace than Lord Sri Ram?

कीबेको बिसोक लोक लोकपाल हुते सब,
 कहुँ कोऊ भो न चरवाहो कपि-भालुको ।
 पबिको पहारु कियो ख्यालही कृपाल राम,
 बापुरो बिभीषनु घरैँधा हुतो बालुको ।।
 नाम-ओट लेत ही निखोट होत खोटे खल,
 चोट बिनु मोट पाइ भयो न निहालु को ?
 तुलसीकी बार बड़ी ढील होति सीलसिंधु!
 बिगरी सुधारिबेको दूसरो दयालु को ।।17।।

17-The various Lokpals (custodians of the world, e.g. Indra) were there to look after the needs of, and eliminate the sorrows (troubles) of, the Lokas (worlds), but till now none of them had bothered about feeding and the general well-being of bears and monkeys.

Poor Vibhishan, who was as weak and fragile as a sand-house (like the ones made on the beach by children, it collapses almost immediately), was made strong and invincible like a mountain similar to Vajra (a weapon of Indra which is the strongest thing in existence as well as is invincible) by a mere wish of Lord Ram.

Corrupt and wicked people become free from sins immediately on taking the shelter of his (Ram's) holy Name. Indeed, who will not be satisfied (pleased and contented) by getting a bundle or pot of wealth (treasure) without having to make any effort for it? [Saying of the Lord's name requires least of efforts; it is easy on the tongue and needs no special effort and time such as is required for doing Yoga and pursuing other means of attaining salvation and emancipation. But its benefits are immense. This is equivalent to getting a huge trove of treasure as reward without making the minimal of efforts to acquire it.]

Tulsidas lovingly complains to his Lord and says, 'Oh the ocean of virtuous qualities! You are not paying due attention towards me! Indeed, say, who can mend what has already gone wrong better than you? [That is, who can give salvation to this wretched Tulsidas, who has already wasted his life in vain, except you?]

नामु लिएँ पूतको पुनीत कियो पातकीसु,
 आरति निवारी 'प्रभु पाहि' कहें पीलकी ।
 छलनिको छोडी, सो निगोड़ी छोटी जाति-पाँति
 कीन्ही लीन आपुमें सुनारी भोंडे भीलकी ।।
 तुलसी औ तोरिबो बिसारिबो न अंत मोहि,
 नीकें है प्रतीति रावरे सुभाव-सीलकी ।
 देऊ, तौ दयानिकेत, देत दादि दीननको,

मेरी बार मेरें ही अभाग नाथ ढील की ।।18।।

18-'You had purified the chief of sinners (Ajaamil) when he called out the name of his son (Narain; this word happens to be one of the thousand names of Lord Vishnu), and removed the sorrows of Gaja (the elephant) as soon as he cried out 'save me Lord!' You had even merged the soul of that old Bhil woman (Sabari), who was the daughter of cunning (crafty, deceitful) parents, luckless, of low birth and ignorant and foolish, into your Supreme-Self.

Now, I pray, you give salvation to Tulsidas also. At last, don't forget me (or overlook me). I have great faith in your caring and merciful character. Oh God (Sri Ram)! You are the abode of mercy; you always help the poor. Oh Lord! (It appears that—) It is my bad luck that when my turn comes for liberation (from worldly bondages), you have become negligent (or you are showing lack of interest or enthusiasm in protecting me). [It is not that Tulsidas is accusing the Lord with any malefic intention of giving him a bad name, but he is doing it in a lovable manner to draw his attention towards himself just like a child chides its mother of neglecting it inspite of knowing that the mother is extremely caring and loving, and no one loves the child more than the mother. The child feels that it needs to draw the mother's attention towards itself, though the mother is already caring for the child. The mother too does not take this chiding seriously, and instead love and affection begins to heave inside her bosom.] '

आगें परे पाहन कृपाँ किरात, कोलनी,
कपीस, निसिचर अपनाए नाएँ माथ जू।
साँची सेवकाई हनुमान की सुजानराय,
रिनियाँ कहाए हौ, बिकाने ताके हाथ जू।।
तुलसी-से खोटे खरे होत ओट नाम ही की,
तेजी माटी मगहू की मृगमद साथ जू।
बात चलें बातको न मानिबो बिलगु, बलि,
काकी सेवाँ रीझिकै नेवाजो रघुनाथ जू? ।।19।।

19-'Oh Lord! You had shown your kindness to the stone lying in your way (Ahilya), and had graciously accepted Kiraat, the Bhil-woman (Sabari), Sugriv and even the demon Vibhishan by their mere bowing their heads before you. Oh the best amongst the virtuous ones! It was Hanuman who had actually done true service to you, as a result of which you were indebted and obliged to him. Wicked liars like Tulsidas become truthful on invoking your holy Name even as the mud on the way becomes invaluable on contact with musk. If I ask you something in this context, please do not mind. Oh Sri Ram! I beg to know from you, say, on whom have you shown kindness based on the quality of his service? [Tulsidas means that the Lord is so magnanimous and gracious that he loves his poor and wretched devotee and follower out of simple affection for him, and not because he has served the Lord in any way better than the other. So, why is the Lord not paying heed to Tulsidas though he has not been able to serve the Lord according to his expectations? Tulsidas says 'Oh Lord. No one has served you so well as to please you sufficiently enough that you shower your kindness on him. Then why don't you show this same kindness on me also?']

कौसिककी चलत, पषानकी परस पाय
 टूटत धनुष बनि गई है जनककी ।
 कोल, पसु, सबरी, बिहंग, भालु, रतिचर,
 रतिनके लालचिन प्रापति मनककी ।।
 कोटि-कला-कुसल कृपाल नतपाल! बलि,
 बातहू केतिक तिन तुलसी तनककी ।
 राय दसरथके समथ राम राजमनि!
 तेरे हेरे लोपै लिपि बिधिहू गनककी ।।20 ।।

20-'Kausik (sage Vishwamitra) was satisfied by your merely accompanying him; Ahilya, who was turned into stone, was librated by your mere touch; and Janak's aim was fulfilled by the breaking of the bow which broke when you merely touched it.

The Kols, animals (monkeys and bears), Sabari, vulture (Jatau) and demons (Vibhishan) had some minor (small or trifle) desires (or expectations), but they were rewarded bountifully by you (i.e. they got more than what they had expected). Oh Lord who is an expert in millions (countless) of artful tacts, and who is a merciful protector of those who beg or request before you! I fondly beg before you! This humble-as-a-straw Tulsidas has very little to say (he is not demanding or expecting much). Oh king Dasrath's able and most exalted son, Sri Ram! Even the writings of a Brahma-like astrologer (the predictions of whom can't generally go wrong) can be waived or erased by as much as a wishful glance from you! [So, please be look at me with your merciful glance and have compassion for me. It is my firm belief that if you would as simply as look at me even in the passing, my fortunes would be made.]'

सिला-श्रापु पापु गुह-गीधको मिलापु
 सबरीके पास आपु चलि गए हौ सो सुनी मैं ।
 सेवक सराहे कपिनायकु बिभीषनु
 भरतसभा सादर सनेह सुरधुनी मैं ।।
 आलसी-अभागी-अघी-आरत-अनाथपाल
 साहेबु समर्थ एकु, नीकें मन गुनी मैं ।
 दोष-दुख-दारिद-दलैया दीनबंधु राम!
 'तुलसी' न दूसरो दयानिधानु दुनी मैं ।।21 ।।

21-'I have already heard about the sin (of adultery) of the stone (Ahilya), your meeting with Nishad (boat-man) and vulture (Jatau), and that you had gone to Sabari on your own (without invitation). You had, in front of Bharat in the midst of the royal assembly, affectionately, respectfully and obligingly praised your servants (subordinates) such as the king of monkeys (Sugriv) and Vibhishan as being equal to the holy river Ganges in purity. I have carefully decided and have come to the conclusion that you are the only Lord who is an able sustainer of the indolent, luckless, sinners, distressed and destitute.'

Tulsidas says further, 'Oh Ram, the friend of the wretched! You are the eliminator of sins, sorrows and poverty. There is no one as merciful as you in this world.'

मीतु बालिबंधु, पूतु, दूतु, दसकंधबंधु
 सचिव, सराधु कियो सबरी-जटाइको ।
 लंक जरी जोहें जियँ सोचुसो बिभीषनुको,

कहौ ऐसे साहेबकी सेवाँ न खटाइ को ।।
 बड़े एक-एकतैं अनेक लोक लोकपाल,
 अपने-अपनेको तौ कहैगो घटाइ को ।
 साँकरेके सेइबे, सराहिबे, सुमिरिबेको
 रामु सो न साहेबु न कुमति-कटाइ को ।।22 ।।

22-He (Lord Ram) made Bali's brother (Sugriv) his friend, and the former's (Bali's) son (Angad) as his messenger; he made the brother of an arch enemy like Ravana one of his senior ministers (a reference to Vibhishan); he performed the last rites (funeral) of Jatau (a vulture) and Sabari (a low-born woman); and upon seeing the burnt-out city of Lanka he felt guilty (instead of rejoicing at ruining an enemy's city, because he regretted that now he would have to give a burnt-out city while making Vibhishan its king).

Tulsidas wonders 'who would not succeed in the service of such a kind and obliging Lord?' There are numerous Lokas (worlds) and each has its own Lord. Who will dare or want to call any of these Lords inferior to the other? But Tulsidas says that as far as he is concerned, there is no other Lord more gracious, kind, merciful, munificent and benevolent than Lord Ram who can be served by those overcome by misfortunes and miseries, who is worthy of more praise and honour, and who can be remembered with more reverence and love.

भूमिपाल, ब्यालपाल, नाकपाल, लोकपाल
 कारन कृपाल, मैं सबैके जीकी थाह ली ।
 कादरको आदरु काहूँ नहिं देखिअत,
 सबनि सोहात है सेवा-सुजानि टाहली ।।
 तुलसी सुभायँ कहै, नहिं कछु पछपातु,
 कौनै ईस किए कीस भालु खास माहली ।
 रामही के द्वारे पै बोलाइ सनमानिअत
 मोसे दीन दूबरे कपूत कूर काहली ।।23 ।।

23-The kings of the earth (terrestrial world), the kings of serpents (subterranean world), the Gods of heaven (celestial world), and the Lokpals (custodians of all the directions of the world)—all of them show kindness due to some vested interest (i.e. they are selfish). I have measured (found out) their hearts (intentions). No one respects cowards and the downtrodden; everyone prefers (is pleased with) expert helpers/subordinates.

Tulsidas says what he feels is the truth; he does not take sides with any one. Say, which master or lord has made bears and monkeys servants of his personal palace or residence (i.e. kept them in his personal service and close to him) like Lord Ram has done? It is only at the door of Lord Ram that wretched, weak, meek, unworthy, cowards and indolent like me (Tulsidas) are summoned and given due respect, are shown kindness and mercy.

सेवा अनुरूप फल देत भूप कूप ज्यों,
 बिहूने गुन पथिकपिआसे जात पथके ।
 लेखें-जोखें चोखें चित 'तुलसी' स्वास्थ हित,
 नीकें देखे देवता देवैया घने गथके ।।
 गीधु मानो गुरु कपि-भालु माने मीत कै,

पुनीत गीत साके सब साहेब समर्थके ।
 और भूप परखि सुलाखि तौलि ताइ लेत,
 लसमके खसमु तुही पै दसरत्थके ।।24 ।।

24-The kings of this world give rewards according to the service rendered to them much like a well which gives water to the thirsty only if they have a rope to pull water out of it with the help of a bucket. Otherwise, they go thirsty inspite of there being a lot of water in the well. [It means that like water cannot be drawn from a well without a rope, one cannot expect anything from a king without possessing some quality that is of some benefit for the king].

Tulsidas says that by all accounts considered by a cool head (i.e. after proper calculations and deliberations), he has come to the conclusion that there are many Gods who give wealth and boons for some vested self interest or expectations from their worshippers. But Sri Ram is a selfless Lord because he even regarded a vulture (Jatau) as his Guru (father) and treated bears and monkeys as his friends. The Lord's glorious stories and famed deeds are pure and purifying for the soul to sing.

Whereas all other kings accept a servant after properly testing him like one does while purchasing gold or other valuable items by properly testing their purity, ascertaining their value, weight etc., the son of Dasrath (Sri Ram) is the only refuge for the worthless wretches. [Those who have no succour and solace anywhere in this world, those who are rejected by the world as being worthless, they find refuge with Lord Ram. He accepts all those rejected by other kings and the world without asking them any question as to their worthiness. He accepts them with open arms and without reservations of any kind.]

सीति महाराजकी, नेवाजिए जो माँगनो, सो
 दोष-दुख-दारिद्र दखि कै-कै छेड़िए ।
 नामु जाको कामतरु देत फल चारि, ताहि
 'तुलसी' बिहाइके बबूर-रेंड गोड़िए ।।
 जाचै को नरेस, देस-देसको कलेसु करै
 देहैं तौ प्रसन्न हैं बड़ी बड़ाई बौड़िए ।
 कृपा-पाथनाथ लोकनाथ-नाथ सीतानाथ
 तजि रघुनाथ हाथ और काहि ओड़िये ।।25 ।।

25-It is the natural tendency or an established tradition with the Lord (Sri Ram) that once he accepts someone, he reduces his sins, sorrows and wants to a minimal fraction possible. His name is like a Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of the gods that is able to give any desired fruit) that provides all the four celebrated fruits (rewards) of Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness), Kaam (fulfilled desires) and Moksha (salvation) to the devotee just for the asking.

Tulsidas says who would (i.e. is foolish enough to) plant Acacia and Castor plants (instead of such a wonderful Kalpa Tree)? Who would beg before worldly kings? Who would take the trouble to go on long voyages to earn money? If anyone giver of alms is pleased, he would give a penny at the most, excepting Sri Ram of course, for he is an ocean of mercy and kindness, and the Lord of the Lokpals. [That is, Lord Ram is like an Emperor as compared to other charitable kings and alms-givers.] In front of who else should one stretch one's hand to seek anything?

जाकें बिलोकत लोकप होत, बिसोक लहैं सुरलोग सुठौरहि ।
 सो कमला तजि चंचलता, करि कोटि कला रिझवै सुरमौरहि ।।
 ताको कहाइ, कहै तुलसी, तूँ लजाहि न मागत कूकुर-कौरहि ।
 जानकी-जीवनको जनु है जरि जाउ सो जीह जो जाचत औरहि ।।26 ।।

26-Laxmi (goddess of wealth), whose mere benign glance can make a man a King of men and the Gods receive comfortable and pleasant abodes, abandons her naturally transient and restless character and tries to enchant Lord Ram in the form of Lord Vishnu by using numerous methods. Tulsidas asks himself—'Don't you feel ashamed at yourself at asking for morsels of leftover food that is thrown to a dog (i.e. asking for worthless things, or small favours and comforts) while calling yourself a servant (or devotee) of such a great Lord as Sri Ram? Being servants of Sri Ram, those who seek anything from anyone else—let their tongues be burnt! [That is, it is a matter of great shame, ignominy and self-insult that one should request anything from anyone else, such as Gods, Goddesses and others, when one has Lord Ram as his benevolent and most magnanimous all-round protector and sustainer.]'

जड पंच मिलै जेहिं देह करी, करनी लखु धौं धरनीधरकी ।
 जनकी कहु, क्यों करिहैं न सँभार, जो सार करै सचराचरकी ।।
 तुलसी ! कहु राम समान को आन है, सेवकि जासु रमा घरकी ।
 जगमें गति जाहि जगत्पतिकी परवाह है ताहि कहा नरकी ।।27 ।।

27-Indeed, marvel at the art of that Lord of the land (here implying the universe) who had moulded this (live) body out of the five inanimate substances (air, water, earth, fire, sky). If he can look after (i.e. sustain) all the animate as well as the inanimate creation, say, why would he not look after his devotees (who is completely dependent upon him)? Tulsidas addresses himself, saying, 'Oh Tulsidas, say who is comparable to Lord Ram whose household maid is Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity) herself? Anyone who relies on such an able Lord should not bother about having to please others.'

जग जाचिअ कोउ न, जाचिअ जौं जियँ जाचिअ जानकीजानहि रे ।
 जेहि जाचत जाचकता जरि जाइ, जो जारति जोर जहानहि रे ।।
 गति देखु बिचारि बिभीषनकी, अरु आनु हिउँ हनुमानहि रे ।
 तुलसी ! भजु दारिद-दोष-दवानल संकट-कोटि-कृपानहि रे ।।28 ।।

28-One should not beg for anything from anyone in this world. If it is necessary to ask, then one should ask from Lord Ram silently (i.e. prayerfully, quietly, mentally, without making a show of it), because as soon as one seeks from him, the seeker's wants and shortages—his poverty and desires which are burning (tormenting) the world endlessly—are burnt (i.e. eliminated) instantly themselves. [This world is constantly suffering from desires of one or the other kind. Sri Ram is capable of exhausting this fuel of 'desire', thereby giving immense relief to this turbulent and tormented world.]

Consider the condition of Vibhishan and remember that of Hanuman. Tulsidas says to himself, 'Oh Tulsidas! Worship Sri Ram, who is like a 'Davanal' (the dooms-day

fire; the wild forest fire) to burn the sins in the shape of poverty, and is like a sword to cut down millions of (countless) troubles.'

सुनु कान दिउँ, नितु नेमु लिउँ रघुनाथहिके गुनगाथहि रे।
 सुखमंदिर सुंदर रूपु सदा उर आनि धरें धनु-भाथहि रे॥
 रसना निसि-बासर सादर सों तुलसी! जपु जानकीनाथहि रे।
 करु संग सुसील सुसंतन सों, तजि कूर, कपंथ कुसाथहि रे॥29॥

29-[Tulsidas gives this wise advice—] 'Oh Tulsidas! Hear the virtuous stories of Sri Ram with full ears (i.e. with full attention and devotion). Always remember (think of) Sri Ram's beauteous countenance (form) that holds a bow and arrow, for he is the abode of all bliss. Chant Sri Ram's holy Name respectfully with your tongue day and night. Always keep the company of virtuous, noble and saintly persons, and forsake or abandon any kind of contact or dealings with persons who are deceitful. Avoid the path that is unrighteous and improper, and abhor bad company.'

सुत, दार, अगारु, सखा, परिवारु बिलोकु महा कुसमाजहि रे।
 सबकी ममता तजि कै, समता सजि, संतसभाँ न बिराजहि रे॥
 नरदेह कहा, करि देखु बिचारु, बिगारु गँवार न काजहि रे।
 जनि डोलहि लोलुप कूकरु ज्यौ, तुलसी भजु कोसलराजहि रे॥30॥

30-'You should consider as a great and evil company your son, wife, household, friends, family—you should leave attachments towards them and be indifferent towards them. Why don't you stay in the assembly (company) of saints instead? What is the purpose of having this body, have you ever wondered? Just think over it.'

Tulsidas says to himself, 'Oh you idiot! Don't spoil the work and lose the golden opportunity. Don't wander aimlessly like a greedy dog, and instead worship Lord Ram.' [Tulsidas has compared the body of a man entangled in the world to that of a dog who goes from one household to another one seeking morsels of food, and getting insulted and shooed away. The stupid dog nibbles at a dry piece of bone and thinks that it has got the treasure of its life. Well, a man has got a human body, and it is a golden opportunity given to him to seek final liberation and freedom from the chain of endless birth and death. And he must not let go of this once-in-a-life time chance. Worldly relationships are always entangling and based on selfishness. A person is loved or wanted only till the time he meets the demands of those around them or serves their self-interest. Otherwise, the world begins to treat him as dust. So Tulsidas advises that it is better to be in the company of wise saints because this would help the person develop renunciation with the world of artificiality and instead develop attachment with the world of reality and truth—i.e. the world related to the Atma and the Parmatma, the world of self-realisation and spiritual truth that leads to one's emancipation and salvation.]

बिषया परनारि निसा-तरुनाई सो पाइ पर्यो अवुरागहि रे।
 जमके पहरु दुख, रोग बियोग बिलोकत हू न बिरागहि रे॥
 ममता बस तैं सब भूलि गयो, भयो भोरु महा भय, भागहि रे।

जरठाइ दिसाँ, रबिकालु उग्यो, अजहूँ जड़ जीव! न जागहि रे।।31।।

31-'In the night of youthfulness you have become enamoured of the pleasures of the senses (in the form of another person's woman). You do not get renunciation (or are not inspired) even after looking at the gate keepers of Yam (the God of Death and Hell) in the form of sorrows, diseases, separations and various losses that you witness happening all around you in this horrifying world. You have forgotten all the horrors of your previous life and those suffered by you in the past in this life itself due to attachments and delusions that surround you. Now it is dawn, so wake up and run away from all this great fear created by ignorance. The death and its attendant agonies in the shape of a sun have risen in the east represented by your old age. Oh you dud! You still don't wake up!'

जनम्यो जेहिं जोनि, अनेक क्रिया सुख लागि करी, न परै बरनी।
जननी-जनकादि हितू भये भूरि बहोरि भई उरकी जरनी।।
तुलसी ! अब रामको दासु कहाइ, हिउँ धरु चातककी धरनी।
करि हंसको बेषु बड़ो सबसों, तजि दे बक-बायसकी करनी।।32।।

32-'From whichever womb you had emerged (took birth as whatever type of creature), you did so many types of deeds (made so many efforts) for obtaining happiness. You had many favourites (in the beginning) such as parents, kin etc., but later on they were cause of heart-burn.'

Tulsidas talks about himself saying, 'At least, and at last, become a servant of Sri Ram even now and assume the temperament and demeanours of a Chatak (if you want real peace and happiness). [This bird does not seek water from any one except the rain-bearing cloud. Likewise, Tulsidas advises that one should also not seek anything from anyone else except Sri Ram]. You have assumed the form of a great and noble bird known as the Swan, and do the despicable deeds of like that of a crane/stork and a crow—you should stop this falsehood forthwith. [Tulsidas says that you pretend to be wise and learned like the bird swan that is considered a wise bird because it has the uncanny ability to pick up pearls amongst an assortment of gems, and drinks pure milk and leaves behind the water content that adulterates it. But your deeds are quite the opposite—for you are cunning, deceitful and clever like a crow and a stork. This is not good for you, because you are not only cheating the world but also cheating your own self.]'

भलि भारतभूमि, भलें कुल जन्मु, समाजु सरीरु भलो लहि कै।
करषा तजि कै परुषा बरषा हिम, मारुत, घाम सदा सहि कै।।
जो भजै भगवानु सयान सोई, 'तुलसी' हठ चातकु ज्यों गहि कै।
नतु और सबै बिषबीज बए, हर हाटक कामदुहा नहि कै।।33।।

33-'You have taken birth in the holy land of Bharat (India), in an exalted clan (Arya race), and have found a good society and body.' Tulsidas says that in such a fortunate circumstance, a person who abandons anger and harsh words, tolerates rain, winter (cold), wind (storms) and heat (summer), and always worships Lord Ram with concerted

and focused devotion like the Chatak bird (as described in verse no. 32)—such a person is to be considered wise and clever. Otherwise, all others (except Sri Ram's sincere devotees) are using a golden plough harnessed to a Kamdhenu cow, but sowing seeds of poison. [He means that these people are spoiling the opportunity offered to them, and in spite of having a golden plough and the all wish-fulfilling cow at their disposal, they are sowing worthless seeds by pursuing this world of delusions and the pleasures of the sense organs, instead of devoting their time in thinking of their salvation and emancipation by adopting the easy path of having devotion for Lord Ram and invoking his merciful Name. How foolish of them if they don't do it!]

जो सुकृती सुचिमत सुसंत, सुजान सुसीलसिरोमनि स्वै ।
सुर-तीरथ तासु मनावत आवत, पावन होत हैं ता तनु छवै ॥
गुनगेहु सनेहको भाजनु सो, सब ही सों उठाइ कहौ भुज द्वै ।
सतिभायँ सदा छल छाड़ि सबै 'तुलसी' जो रहै रघुबीरको है ॥३४॥

34-Tulsidas says, 'I raise my hands and declare solemnly that those persons who abandon all deceit and falsehood and surrender themselves to Lord Ram by all means, are the 'Sadhus'—those persons who are holy, pious, simple and pure at heart, those who are virtuous, noble, worthy and most exalted. Even the Gods and the pilgrim cities come to them when they wish to see or visit them, and these entities themselves become pure and holy when they are touched by such exalted Sadhus. Indeed, such persons become a treasury of all goodness and virtues, and they get universal affection and respect from all.'

सो जननी, सो पिता, सोइ भाइ, सो भामिनि, सो सुतु, सो हितु मेरो ।
सोइ सगो, सो सखा, सोइ सेवकु, सो गुरु, सो सुरु, साहेबु चरो ॥
सो 'तुलसी' प्रिय प्राण समान, कहाँ लौ बनाइ कहौ बहुतेरो ।
जो तजि देहको, गेहको नेहु, सनेहसों रामको होइ सबेरो ॥३५॥

35-Tulsidas says, 'A person who abandons attractions or attachments towards his body and household, and surrenders himself, unconditionally and without reservations, to Lord Ram as soon as possible—such an exalted person is like my mother, father, brother, wife, son, benefactor, kin, a true friend, a faithful and obedient servant/subordinate, guru (teacher), Lord (God), master et al—in fact every relation that exists is embodied in him. What more can I say, he becomes dearer to me than my own life.'

रामु हैं मातु, पिता, गुरु, बंधु, औ संगी, सखा, सुतु, स्वामि, सनेही ।
रामकी सौह, भरोसो है रामको, राम रँग्यो, रुचि राच्यो न केही ॥
जीअत रामु, मुएँ पुनि रामु, सदा रघुनाथहि की गति जेहीं ।
सोई जिऐ जगमें, 'तुलसी' नतु डोलत और मुए धरि देही ॥३६॥

36-'Sri Ram is my mother, father, teacher, friend, companion, son and Lord, and the dearest. I swear in the name of Sri Ram that I rely only upon him. I have coloured myself in his paint (i.e. I have lost any other identity except as an ardent devotee of Sri Ram). And I don't find interest in anyone else except my Lord Sri Ram.'

Tulsidas further says, 'He who is dear to Lord Ram while alive and becomes one with Sri Ram after death, who has only one reliance of Lord Ram in his life—he is the one who actually 'lives' in this world fruitfully, while all others are really dead, though they have a body which moves and speaks.'

सियराम-सरूप अगाध अनूप बिलोचन-मीननको जलु है।
 श्रुति रामकथा, मुख रामको नामु, हिउँ पुनि रामहिको थलु है॥
 मति रामहि सौ, गति रामहि सौ, रति रामसौ, रामहि को बलु है।
 सबकी न कहै, तुलसीके मते इतनो जग जीवनको फलु है॥३७॥

37-The peerless and most beautiful image (vision) of Lord Ram and Sita is like a fathomless body of water for the fish in the form of the eyes. To have ears that hear the stories of Lord Ram, the mouth that chants the name of Lord Ram, the heart in which Lord Ram resides, the mind and the intellect that is engrossed in the thoughts of Lord Ram, to have Lord Ram as the only reliance in this world, to have affection and devotion only for Lord Ram, and to regard Lord Ram as the only source of strength and support—Tulsidas says that he does not know about others, but for him (i.e. according to his wisdom) this is the only fruit (benefit) of taking birth (living) in this world as a living being.

दसरथके दानि सिरोमनि राम! पुरान प्रसिद्ध सुन्यो जसु मैं।
 नर नाग सुरासुर जाचक जो, तुमसौं मन भावत पायो न कै॥
 तुलसी कर जोरि करै बिनती, जो कृपा करि दीनदयाल सुनै।
 जेहि देह सनेहु न रावरे सौं, असि देह धराइ कै जायँ जियै॥३८॥

38-'Oh Lord Sri Ram, the son of Dasrath and the best amongst donors I have heard of your fame and noble character being sung by the Purans. Amongst all the humans, the serpents (i.e. creatures of the subterranean world), the Gods and the demons—who has not got his desires fulfilled by seeking what they desire from you? If the Lord, who is kind towards the distressed and the poor, is kind enough to hear what I say, then this Tulsidas prays with folded hands that it is useless to have a body and live with it without having affection and devotion for you.' [Amongst all the living beings in this creation, only those creatures who have devotion for Sri Ram are fruitfully living and putting their life and their bodies to good use; the rest of them are as good as dead.]

झूठे है, झूठे है, झूठे सदा जगु, संत कहंत जे अंतु लहा है।
 ताको सहै सठ! संकट कोटिक, काढ़त दंत, करंत हहा है॥
 जानपनीको गुमान बड़ो, तुलसीके बिचार गँवार महा है।
 जानकीजीवनु जान न जान्यो तौ जान कहावत जान्यो कहा है॥३९॥

39-Tulsidas addresses himself and says—'Oh you wicked fellow! Those saints who have realised the true nature of this world (literally, measured the world) repeatedly assert that it is deluding, false and illusionary, but you suffer for it (in trying to enjoy it or please it or acquire it), and you express lamentations or regrets (at not being successful at it) by baring your teeth. You seem to be very proud of your wisdom', but according to Tulsidas,

'you are a great fool. If you could not realise (the true nature of) Lord Ram, then you have not actually realised anything.'

तिन्ह तें खर, सूकर, खान भले, जड़ता बस ते न कहैं कछु वै।
 'तुलसी' जेहि रामसों नेहु नहीं सो सही पसु पूँछ, बिषान न द्वै।
 जननी कत भार मुई दस मास, भई किन बाँझ, गई किन चै।
 जरि जाउ सो जीवनु, जानकीनाथ! जियै जगमें तुम्हरो बिनु है। 40।।

40-Tulsidas says that those who do not have affection for Lord Ram are really as good as animals—they only lack a tail and two horns. Even dogs, donkeys and pigs are better than them, because being animals, they at least keep quiet (i.e. don't boast that they are wise and fortunate). Why did their mothers not die while they were in their wombs, why did not she become barren, or why did she not abort? Oh Sri Janki Nath (Sri Ram). Those who live a life devoid of you are worth burning to ashes. [Tulsidas means that a life devoid of affection and devotion towards Sri Ram is futile, useless and not worth living.]

गज-बाजि-घटा, भले भूरि भटा, बनिता, सुत भौह तकैं सब वै।
 धरनी, धनु धाम सरीरु भलो, सुरलोकहु चाहि इहै सुख सवै।।
 सब फोटक साटक है तुलसी, अपनो न कछु सपनो दिन द्वै।
 जरि जाउ सो जीवन जानकीनाथ! जियै जगमें तुम्हरो बिनु है। 41।।

41-One has all the comforts and wealth of this world—such as many elephants and horses, many good warriors at service, wife and sons who are obedient, abundance of land and wealth, a comfortable household and a healthy body—all are favourable and according to one's liking, and one enjoys comforts greater than the abode of Gods. But Tulsidas says that all this is futile, useless and without meaning and substance; nothing belongs to us. All this is a two-day dream (i.e. temporary, transient). Oh Sri Ram, the Lord of Janki (Sita)! Those who live in this world devoid of your grace and having devotion for you, let their life be burnt to ashes (i.e. it is useless to live such a life, so let it perish).

सुरराज सो राज-समाजु, समृद्धि बिरंचि, धनाधिप-सो धनु भो।
 पवमानु-सो पावकु-सो, जमु, सोमु-सो, पूषनु-सो भवभूषनु भो।।
 करि जोग, समीरन साधि, समाधि कै धीर बड़ो, बसहु मनु भो।
 सब जाय, सुभायँ कहै तुलसी, जो न जानकीजीवनको जनु भो। 42।।

42-A person may possess royal paraphernalia and regal grandeur comparable to Indra, fame and renown comparable to Brahma, wealth and prosperity comparable to Kuber, may be swift like the wind, splendid and dazzling like the fire, scepter-wielder like the Yam (God of Death and Hell), be soothing, cool and producer of love and affectionate feelings like the moon, be an illuminator of the world like the sun, be an ornament of the world (i.e. most worthy); be very fortitudinous and tolerant by meditating and practicing Yoga that enables one to exercise exemplary control over the power of wind (breath)—inspite of all the above eclectic qualities that one possesses,

Tulsidas says truthfully that if one does not become a servant (devotee, follower) of Lord Ram, then all these achievements are futile and worthless.

कामु-से रूप, प्रताप दिनेसु-से, सोमु-से सील, गनेसु-से माने ।
 हरिचंद्र-से साँचे, बड़े बिधि-से, मघवा-से महीप बिषै-सुख-साने ।।
 सुक-से मुनि, सारद-से बकता, चिरजीवन लोमस तैं अधिकाने ।
 ऐसे भए तौ कहा 'तुलसी', जो पै राजिवलोचन रामु न जाने ।।43 ।।

43—If a man did not realise (recognise) who Sri Ram, the lotus-eyed Lord, is, then what is the use of his possessing other exceptional qualities and characters, such as for example his being as attractive and charming in appearance as Kamdeo (the most charming and attractive god in physical beauty), his being as radiant and dazzling in personality as the sun itself, his being as soothing and comforting as the moon, his being as respected and honoured as Lord Ganesh (the elephant-headed god who is the most revered god and worshipped before other gods during any religious ceremony), his being equivalent to king Harischandra in upholding the virtues of truthfulness, his being as exalted as the creator Brahma, his being able to enjoy a kingly life like that of Indra (the king of gods who enjoys the best of kingly life in this creation), his being as wise and learned as the parrot sage known as Sukdeo (who had recited the Sri Bhagwat Maha Puran), his being an expert orator like goddess Saraswati herself, and his having a life longer than sage Lomash (who is said to have an eternal life).

[In other words, all the eclectic qualities that exist in this world would be of no value and would not make a man worthy of respect and honour if he does not have the wisdom to know the reality of Lord Ram as a personified form of the Supreme Being.]

झूमत द्वार अनेक मतंग जँजीर-जरे, मद अंबु चुचाते ।
 तीखे तुरंग मनोगति-चंचल, पौनके गौनहु तैं बढ़ि जाते ।।
 भीतर चंद्रमुखी अवलोकति, बाहर भूप खरे न समाते ।
 ऐसे भए तौ कहा, तुलसी, जो पै जानकीनाथके रंग न राते ।।44 ।।

44—[Tulsidas asserts that all the glories and worldly pomp are futile if one does not have devotion and love for Lord Ram so much so that he loses his independent identity and becomes one with the Lord.]

A person (such as an Emperor) may have numerous healthy and robust elephants tied with chains and swaying to and fro at the gates of his residence (palace), he may have a large number of horses who are as swift or even faster than the wind and the speed of mind available in the stable, there may be present a moon-faced (beautiful) wife in the household to look at, and outside his gates there may be a crowd of renowned kings of stature, who are so numerous that they could not be accommodated inside the court (and so spilled over outside), waiting for their turn to meet this person (Emperor)—but Tulsidas says that inspite of such great and exceptionally good fortunes, pomp, pageantry, circumstance and fame, if one does not paint oneself in the colour of Sri Ram (i.e. if one does not totally identifies oneself with the Supreme Lord and extinguishes his independent existence and identity by total surrender to the Lord), then what is the good

and the use of this show, pretension and drama of grandeur and majesty (as described above).

राज सुरेस पचासकको बिधिके करको जो पटो लिखि पाएँ।
 पूत सुपूत, पुनीत प्रिया, निज सुंदरताँ रतिको महु नाएँ॥
 संपत्ति-सिद्धि सबै 'तुलसी' मनकी मनसा चितवै चितु लाएँ।
 जानकीजीवन जानै बिना जग ऐसेउ जीव न जीव कहाएँ॥45॥

45—One may possess the lease-deed written by the creator Brahma himself of fifty kingdoms as magnificent as those of Indra's, he may have sons who are very worthy, he may have a faithful wife who puts to shame the pride of Rati (the consort of Kamdeo) by her beauty, who has all the *Ridhis* and *Sidhis* (prosperity, wealth, achievements, acquisitions, possessions etc.) available in great abundance and in accordance to one's likings—but *Tulsidas* says that if one does not understand or recognise or know who Lord Sri Ram is, then he is not fit to be called a living being in spite of all the worldly glamour, grandeur and magnificent possessions he may have.

कृसगात ललात जो रेटिन को, घरवात घरेँ खुरपा-खरिया।
 तिन्ह सोनेके मेरु-से ढेर लहे, मनु तौ न भरो, घरु पै भरिया॥
 'तुलसी' दुखु दूनो दसा दुहुँ देखि, कियो मुखु दारिद को करिया।
 तजि आस भो दासु रघुपतिको, दसरथको दानि दया-दरिया॥46॥

46—Those who are hungry and emaciated, and therefore roam hungrily for bread, and those whose entire wealth consists of a rope to tie a bundle of grass and a weeder—if they find a huge mountain of gold as large as Mt. Sumeru, they wouldn't be satisfied although that would be sufficient to fill their house (i.e. they can have all possible worldly possessions, but their greed for more won't abate).

Tulsidas says that he has observed (experienced and witnessed) greater poverty and wants in life when he had lost all hopes of redemption. But, when he became a devout devotee of Lord Ram, all his needs were taken care of by Lord Ram who is like a river of mercy and kindness. [Here, *Tulsidas* emphasizes the need for satisfaction or contentedness in whatever one has, because greed, avarice, wistfulness and yearnings have no end. Then again he emphasizes the need to have devotion for the Lord because then it would be the responsibility of the Lord to look after the well-being of his devotee and take care of his basic needs. *Tulsidas* affirms this fact out of his personal experience because earlier he had to seek the help of the world to sustain himself and meet his primary needs also, but once he took the refuge of Lord Ram all his worries melted away.]

को भरिहै हरिके रितएँ, रितवै पुनि को, हरि जौं भरिहै।
 उथपै तेहि को, जेहि रामु थपै, थपिहै तेहि को, हरि जौं ठरिहै॥
 तुलसी यहु जानि हिउँ अपनै सपनै नहिं कालहु तें डरिहै।
 कुमयाँ कछु हानि न औरनकी, जो पै जानकी-नाथु मया करिहै॥47॥

47—When God has emptied anything, who can fill it, and vice-versa. If anyone is established by Lord Sri Ram, who can uproot him, and if anyone is uprooted by the Lord, then who has the power to establish him?

Recognising this fact, Tulsidas will never be afraid of Kaal (time, death, destiny) even in his dreams because if Lord Ram shows kindness and mercy towards him, then whatever others may think or do shall make no difference or in anyway cause any harm to him. [That is, Tulsidas believes that if Lord Ram is munificent and benevolent towards him then he is not at all bothered about the world, and nothing would affect him in the least.]

ब्याल कराल महाबिष, पावक मत्तगयंदहु के रद तोरे।
साँसति संकि चली, डरपे हुते किंकर, ते करनी मुख मोरे॥
नेकु बिषादु नहीं प्रह्लादहि कारन केहरिके बल हो रे।
कौनकी त्रास करै तुलसी जो पै रखिहै राम, तौ मारिहै को रे। 48॥

48—(Referring to Prahalad, the child devotee of Lord Vishnu, Tulsidas says—) Ferocious and venomous snakes, terrible poisons, a blazing fire, and even the tusks of wild elephants got broken, but none of them could harm Prahalad. ‘Troubles’ became alarmed themselves and ran away from him. Even those obedient servants who were afraid of disobeying the king (Pralhad’s demon father) declined to carry out their duties (and obey him). In spite of all the torments inflicted upon him, Prahalad did not worry and neither did he suffer from any pains and sorrows because he was dependent on and relying upon the strength of Lord Narsingh (the Man-Lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu who had intervened to protect Prahalad and kill his demon father who had been tormenting the child endlessly to force him to give up having love and devotion for Lord Vishnu).

Similarly, why should Tulsidas be afraid of anyone? If Lord Sri Ram protects him, who can kill or harm him?

कृपाँ जिनकी कछु काजु नहीं, न अकाजु कछू जिनकेँ मुखु मोरें।
करैं तिनकी परवाहि ते, जो बिनु पूँछ-बिषान फिरैं दिन दोरें॥
तुलसी जेहिके रघुनाथुसे नाथु, समर्थ सुसेवत रीझत थोरें।
कहा भवभीरु परी तेहि धौं, बिचरै धरनीं तिनसों तिनु तोरें। 49॥

49—Only those people who are like animals (i.e. they have no wisdom and a sense of dignity and self-respect) bother about, or try to appease others in the hope of help and support from them, though it actually does not matter if the latter are favourable towards them or opposed to them.

[It means that many people, though they are not animals, forget their true goal or purpose in life, and spend their time pursuing worldly objects, pleasures or simply worry about food and comfort of the sense organs. They would stoop to any level to fulfil these objectives. They try to please other people because they think that they could derive some benefit by such relationship.]

Tulsidas says that a person who relies on such a magnanimous and kind-hearted Lord such as Sri Ram—the Lord who is easy to please with even a small or a minor form of

service and a little bit of devotion (i.e. not much effort is required to please Sri Ram)—has nothing to worry about in this world. Such a man snaps relations with those who try to please the world, and himself moves about in this world without any care. [He does not bother to please anyone else in this world because he has already pleased the Lord of the world known as Sri Ram.]

कानन, भूधर, बारि, बयारि, महाबिषु, ब्याधि, दवा-अरि घेरे।
संकट कोटि जहाँ 'तुलसी', सुत, मातु, पिता, हित, बंधु न नेरे॥
राखिहैं रामु कृपालु तहाँ, हनुमान-से सेवक हैं जेहि केरे।
नाक, रसातल, भूतलमें रघुनायकु एकु सहायकु मेरे॥50॥

50—A person may face unpredictable circumstances at unpredictable places that cause him a lot of misery and pain. Adversities may confront him anywhere in life—it may be in a forest, on the mountain, in water (as when taking a bath in a river when his legs slips and he is drowned), during a storm, in the form of mistakenly eating or drinking a potent poison, in the form of various diseases, in the form of a ravaging fire that burns down everything that he possesses, in the form of being surrounded by enemies, and in numerous other ways in which troubles and misfortunes may grasp a man in his life.

He may find himself all alone to face these adversities, misfortunes, miseries and troubles with none of his worldly relations such as his parents, his brothers, his friends, his sons or his other relatives and kin being present there to help him—Tulsidas reassures such a man who finds himself trapped alone and overcome by terror that even in such dire straits and adverse circumstances, the merciful Lord Ram, who has a powerful helper such as Hanuman, is there to protect you, and he will protect you.

Tulsidas asserts that a man must have firm faith in the Lord and be convinced that 'Sri Ram is my only protector and helper in the three worlds consisting of the land (earth), air (sky) and the subterranean. [And therefore, I have nothing to worry about and fear from.]'

जबै जमराज-रजायसतें मोहि लै चलिहैं भट बाँधि नटैया।
तातु न मातु, न स्वामि-सखा, सुत-बंधु बिसाल बिपत्ति-बटैया॥
साँसति घोर, पुकारत आरत कौन सुनै, चहुँ ओर डटैया।
एकु कृपाल तहाँ 'तुलसी' दसरत्यको नंदनु बंदि-कटैया॥51॥

51—When the messengers of Yam (God of Death and Hell) shall tie a knot around my neck and take (drag) me away on his orders, there will be no father, mother, lord, friend, son or brother to share my troubles, torments and fate. I'll be alone to face and bear that horrible torture and suffering. Who would listen to my wails and cries of distress at that time? I would be surrounded by wrathful, admonishing and scowling messengers of death. Tulsidas says that at that moment there will be only one—the merciful son of Dasrath, Lord Sri Ram—to break my shackles, and provide me liberation from my sufferings.

जहाँ जमजातना, घोर नदी, भट कोटि जलच्चर दंत ठेवैया।
 जहाँ धार भयंकर, वार न पार, न बोहितु नाव, न नीक खेवैया॥
 'तुलसी' जहाँ मातु-पिता न सखा, नहिं कोउ कहूँ अवलंब देवैया।
 तहाँ बिनु कारन रामु कृपाल बिसाल भुजा गहि काढ़ि लेवैया॥52॥

52—(Describing the horrors of the Vaitarni River, literally the river which drowns, that flows in hell, Tulsidas says)—'In the Vaitarni River there are numerous tormenting and ferocious messengers of death represented by sharp-toothed aquatic creatures (such as crocodiles etc.). It is a deep river with very swift currents which sweeps a man away. There are neither ships and boats, nor boatmen to help one cross it. No one is there to help the lonely traveler; there are no parents, friends and other kin to give any kind of support.

Tulsidas says that in such a predicament and precarious situation, one has only Lord Ram to rely upon and seek help from. 'The Lord who shows mercy and kindness without cause (i.e. without expecting anything in return), and who can extend his long arms to pick you up from drowning, will be there to save you from the horrors of the Vaitarni River.'

जहाँ हित स्वामि, न संग सखा, बनिता, सुत, बंधु, न बापु, न मैया।
 काय-गिरा-मनके जनके अपराध सबै छलु छाड़ि छमैया॥
 तुलसी ! तेहि काल कृपाल बिना दूजो कौन है दारुन दुःख दमैया॥
 जहाँ सब संकट, दुर्घट सोचु, तहाँ मेरो साहेबु राखै रमैया॥53॥

53—(Describing the lonely soul in this world, Tulsidas says—) 'Where there is no Lord to help (and provide solace and succour), and neither is there a friend, wife, son, brother, parents etc. to lend support—in such a lonely world, who is there to help a creature except Sri Ram, the merciful and gracious Lord who sincerely excuses all the sins of his servants (devotees), whether these sins are done by their bodies, their minds or their speech, and who also destroys all the horrors and sorrows of his devotees?

In this world so full of horrible troubles and worries, there is only Sri Ram to protect me.' [Tulsidas avers that Lord Ram is the only true friend and companion in this otherwise lonely world.]

तापसको बरदायक देव सबै पुनि बैरु बढावत बाढ़ें।
 थोरेंहि कोपु, कृपा पुनि थोरेंहि, बैठि कै जोरत, तोरत ठाढ़ें॥
 ठैंकि-बजाइ लखें गजराज, कहाँ लौं कहौं केहि सौं रद काढ़ें।
 आरतके हित नाथु अनाथके रामु सहाय सही दिन गाढ़ें॥54॥

54—(Asserting that all in this world are selfish except Lord Ram, Tulsidas says—) 'The Gods give boons to ascetics and hermits, but when they rise in divinity and spiritualism, the same Gods become jealous and opposed to them. They are easily pleased and equally easily antagonized. They make friendship while sitting, and break it on standing (i.e. their friendship is temporary and short-lived).

Whom should I go telling these things, and how much should I say! [That is, what is the use of repeating this thing often.]

The Gaja (the elephant) had tested all thoroughly. He had concluded that Lord Ram is the only true friend of the distressed, Lord of the destitute, and a real and true helper in the days of trouble.' [When the elephant was being pulled in the water by the alligator, he had appealed to all his companions as well as the Gods to save him. But to no avail. When it was certain that he would drown, he finally turned his attention to Lord Vishnu and offered his worship to him by offering the Lord one last lotus. The merciful Lord wasted no time in saving him and killing his tormentor, the alligator.]

जप, जोग, बिराग, महामख-साधन, दान, दया, दम कोटि करै।
मुनि-सिद्ध, सुरेसु, गनेसु, महेसु-से सेवत जन्म अनेक मरै॥
निगमागम-ग्यान, पुरान पढ़ै, तपसानलमें जुगपुंज जैरै।
मनसों पनु रोपि कहै तुलसी, रघुनाथ बिना दुख कौन हरै॥55॥

55—Whether one practices numerous ways to remove one's troubles and sorrows—such as doing Japa (constant reciting of the Lord's holy name), Yoga (meditation), Vairagya (renunciation), Yagya (large fire-sacrifices), Daan (making charity), Daya (acts of kindness), Dam (control of the sense organs), etc.; or he may die after having served sages, mystics, Indra, Ganesh, Shiva and other such Gods continuously in many births; or he studies and learns the essence of the Vedas and other holy scriptures such as the Purans; or he burns himself in the fire of sacrifices, penances and austerities for many ages and many generations—but Tulsidas asserts with a determined mind that no one can eliminate sorrows and troubles except Lord Ram. [That is, it is only when a person develops devotion and love for the Lord and asks him for liberation and deliverance from his troubles that he actually gets it. All other means of seeking peace and happiness of the soul are futile.]

पातक-पीन, कुदारिद-दीन मलीन धरै कथरी-करवा है।
लोकु कहै, बिधिहूँ न लिख्यो सपनेहूँ नहीं अपने बर बाहै॥
रामको किंकरु सो तुलसी, समुझैहि भलो, कहिबो न रवा है।
ऐसेको ऐसो भयो कबहूँ न भजे बिनु बानरके चरवाहै॥56॥

56—The people used to say (about Tulsidas) that he is very sinful, wretched and unfortunate due to his extreme poverty, and he wears dirty and tattered clothes (such as a towel around his waist and another around the shoulder). The creator did not write anything worth-while in his destiny, and he could not support himself even in his dreams. But today the same unfortunate Tulsidas has become a humble servant of Sri Ram. It is good and proper to understand this (because otherwise he would sound boastful). He has now been transformed from a low, wretched and sinful state of existence to such an exalted one without worshipping the 'shepherd of the monkeys' (Sri Ram).

[Note- Tulsidas talks about himself, but as a third person, so that he does not appear to be boasting. Lord Ram is called the 'shepherd of the monkeys' because like a shepherd who guides his flock of sheep and takes care of them, the Lord too directed the army of monkeys and took great care of them and their welfare. If the term 'monkey' is to be used as a metaphor for the humble, the lowly and the

meek, this phrase would mean that the Lord takes up the moral responsibility of taking care of them.]

मातु-पिताँ जग जाइ तज्यो बिधिहूँ न लिखी कछु भाल भलाई ।
नीच, निरादरभाजन, कादर, कूकर-टूकन लागि ललाई ।।
रामु-सुभाउ सुन्यो तुलसी प्रभुसों कह्यो बारक पेदु खलाई ।
स्वारथको परमारथको रघुनाथु सो साहेबु, खोरि न लाई ।।57 ।।

57—The parents had abandoned him (Tulsidas) after birth, and even Brahma (the creator) had not destined any good for him. When that wretched Tulsidas, who was worthy of contempt and insults, who was a coward and so hungry that he greedily looked at the morsels of food thrown to stray dogs, heard of the merciful and benevolent nature of Lord Ram, he narrated all his agonies and sorrowful states to him (Sri Ram) with an open heart. Then the Lord left no stone unturned to improve his worldly and spiritual well-being, and took proper care of him.

पाप हरे, परिताप हरे, तनु पूजि भो हीतल सीतललाई ।
हंसु कियो बकर्ते, बलि जाउँ, कहाँ लौं कहौं करुना-अधिकाई ।।
कालु बिलोकि कहै तुलसी, मनमें प्रभुकी परतीति अघाई ।
जन्मु जहाँ, तहँ रावरे सों निबहै भरि देह सनेह-सगाई ।।58 ।।

58—Tulsidas says— 'Oh Sri Ram! You have destroyed my sins, eliminated all the troubles, made my body worthy of respect, and made my mind peaceful and calm. Oh Lord, I thank you so much that you have converted (transformed) me from a stork (scheming, deceitful, cunning and contemptible person) into a swan (someone who is wise, enlightened and praise-worthy). How much can I describe your kindness and mercy?'

Now Tulsidas says that according to present circumstances, he has complete reliance and faith upon Sri Ram. Hence, 'Wherever I am born, let me be devoted and faithful to you as long as I keep that body.' [This last sentence shows that, probably, Tulsidas is very old and talking about his impending death.]

लोग कहैं, अरु हौंहु कहौं, जनु खोटे-खरो रघुनायकहीको ।
रावरी राम! बड़ी लघुता, जसु मेरो भयो सुखदायकहीको ।।
कै यह हानि सहौ, बलि जाउँ कि मोहू करौ निज लायकहीको ।
आनि हिउँ हित जानि करौ, ज्यो हौं ध्यानु धरौं धनु-सायकहीको ।।59 ।।

59—'People say, and even I say, that whether I am good or bad, I still am always a humble servant of Sri Ram. Oh Ram! This may belittle (undermine) your exalted stature (that a wretch like me is found near you), but the fame I got at being a servant of a great Lord like you gives immense peace and happiness to my heart.

I swear by you (or I sacrifice myself on you) that now either you bear with this loss of face (or humiliation of being called a Lord of this wretched fellow like me), or else make me worthy to serve you (i.e. purify me). Consider this in your heart, and thinking that it is good for me, please do it in a way that I can always remember your divine

vision, your divine form that holds a bow and arrow (i.e. I may remember nothing else except you).'

आपु हौं आपुको नीकें कै जानत, रावरो राम! भरायो-गढ़ायो।
कीरु ज्यौं नामु रटै तुलसी, सो कहै जगु जानकीनाथ पढ़ायो।।
सोई है खेदु, जो बेदु कहै, न घटै जनु जो रघुबीर बढ़ायो।
हौं तौ सदा खरको असवार, तिहारोइ नामु गयंद चढ़ायो।।60।।

60—I know myself well. Oh Sri Ram! I have been created, sustained and developed by you. This Tulsidas repeats your name like a parrot, but the world says that he has been taught (tutored) by you. This is what I regret. [People think that I have attained enlightenment because I chant your name, fully understanding its meaning and essence. On the contrary, I repeat it like an ignorant parrot, which is a bird. If asked, I wouldn't be able to explain its significance. People would then think that my Guru Sri Ram is not competent enough. This is what I regret.]

But the Vedas say that a person who has been made to rise by Lord Ram can never fall. I was worthy of nothing but mounting a donkey (a derogatory term indicating that he had always been most hated and despised by the people), but it is only your (Lord Ram's) name that has made me mount an elephant (like a king—i.e. you have given me so much fame, which probably I don't deserve!).'

छारतें सँवारि कै पहारहू तें भारी कियो,
गारो भयो पंचमें पुनीत पछु पाइ कै।
हौं तो जैसो तब तैसो अब अधमाई कै कै,
पेदु भरौं, राम! रावरोई गुनु गाइकै।।
आपने निवाजेकी पै कीजै लाज, महाराज!
मेरी ओर हेरि कै न बैठिए रिसाइ कै।
पालिकै कृपाल! ब्याल-बालको न मारिए,
औ काटिए न नाथ! बिषहूको रुखु लाइ कै।।61।।

61—You have made me, who was humble and inconsequential like a particle of dust, into someone who is greater than a mountain by caring for me, and having received your favour, I have become the senior most among the 'Panchas' (literally, the 5-noble ones). As far as I am concerned, I am as sinful as I had been earlier. But oh Lord! Think of your reputation of being graceful, kind and merciful, and do not look at me with anger. Oh the kind-and-merciful-one! One should not kill a serpent's young one after rearing it, nor should one cut a poison-tree after planting and watering it. [Tulsidas means that though he is very sinful and useless, but since Sri Ram had looked after him since birth, he should not abandon him now.]

बेद न पुरान-गानु, जानौं न बिग्यानु ग्यानु,
ध्यान - धारना - समाधि - साधन - प्रबीनता।

नाहिन बिरागु, जोग, जाग भाग तुलसी कैं,
 दया-दान दूबरो हौं, पापही की पीनता ।।
 लोभ-मोह-काम-कोह-दोस-कोसु-मोसो कौन ?
 कलिहूँ जो सीखि लई मेरियै मलीनता ।
 एकु ही भरोसो राम! रावरो कहावत हौं,
 रावरे दयालु दीनबंधु! मेरी दीनता ।।62 ।।

62—'I do not know how to recite the Vedas and the Purans, nor am aware of their wisdom and science (metaphysics), and I am not an expert in doing Dhyan (concentration), Dharna (belief, conviction and faith), Samadhi (deep meditation) and Sadhna (other means of spiritual pursuit). There is no Vairagya (renunciation), Yoga (meditative exercises) and doing Yagya (fire sacrifices and other rituals) in the destiny of Tulsidas. I am lean in doing charity and having mercy, but robust in committing sins.

Who else is a treasury of such negative traits as Lobha (greed, rapacity, avarice), Moha (attachments, delusions), Kaam (passions, desires and lust) and Krodh (anger) like me?

It appears that Kaliyug (the present era which is considered to be most corrupt, sinful and full of negativity) has learnt all his dark and demeaning qualities from me. Yes, I have only one hope (of salvation), and that is, 'I call myself yours (Lord Ram's).' You (Sri Ram) are a friend of the wretched, the downtrodden and the distressed. You are full of kindness, and I am extremely humble (so, live up to your reputation, and protect and save me!).'

रावरो कहावौं, गुनु गावौं राम! रावरोइ,
 रोटी द्वै हौं पावौं राम! रावरी हीं कानि हौं ।
 जानत जहानु, मन मेरेहूँ गुमानु बड़ो,
 मान्यो मैं न दूसरो, न मानत, न मानिहौं ।।
 पाँचकी प्रतीति न भरोसो मोहि आपनोई,
 तुम्ह अपनायो हौं तबै हीं परि जानिहौं ।
 गढ़ि-गुढ़ि छेलि-छलि कुंदकी-सी भाईं बातें
 जैसी मुख कहौं, तैसी जीयँ जब आनिहौं ।।63 ।।

63—'Oh Ram! I am called yours and I sing your praises and glories, and oh Lord, it is because of you that I get two rotis (breads) to eat. The world knows and I am also proud of the fact that I recognise no one else except you—hadn't till date, and shall never in future.

I have no belief in the 'Panchas' (the 5-noble men; or a jury of 5 eminent persons), and neither do I rely on myself. [Tulsidas means that he is so stupid that he would not believe what other noble men say, and he is also uncertain of himself. He would not do anything advised by learned men that would lead to his welfare, both worldly and spiritual, and he is also uncertain that whatever he does is actually good for him. In spite of that he is certain of only one thing—and it is that he knows no other means of succour and solace except submitting before Lord Ram, and having love and devotion for him. This is enough for Tulsidas.]

I speak pleasant, appeasing, flattering and sweet things (words) as if they were moulded properly, smoothened and given shape on a lathe machine. When I am able to

bring such refinement and smoothness to my heart, instead of just in my external speech, then I shall consider that you have truly accepted me.' [Tulsidas lays emphasis here on purity of heart that must accompany external good behaviour.]

बचन, बिकारु, करतबउ खुआर, मनु
 बिगत-बिचार, कलिमलको निधानु है।
 रामको कहाइ, नामु बेचि-बेचि, खाइ सेवा-
 संगति न जाइ, पाछिलेको उपखानु है॥
 तेहू तुलसीको लोग भलो-भलो कहै, ताको
 दूसरो न हेतु, एकु नीकें कै निदानु है।
 लोकरीति बिदित बिलोकिअत जहाँ-तहाँ,
 स्वामीकें सनेहँ स्वानहू को सनमानु है॥६४॥

64—Tulsidas says that he has a corrupted speech, his deeds are bad (evil), and his mind is devoid of wisdom and is a treasury of all the vices. He calls himself as one who belongs (is devoted) to Sri Ram, but sells (employs) the Lord's holy Name to feed himself. He has never done any selfish service, nor kept good company of saints.

[That is, Tulsidas says that he is so selfish and despicable that he uses the holy Name of the Lord for such mundane things as seeking food to fill his stomach. People give him alms and show respect to him because he says the Lord's holy Name, but he says it only for such worldly gains and not for his spiritual welfare.]

It's a great wonder that even such a sinful and wretched person as Tulsidas is called 'good' by the people. There is no other reason for it except one. It is a well known social fact and observed everywhere that a dog that is loved by its master gets respect at all the places.

[That is, just like a dog who is loved by a great man such as a king or a noble man is also shown love by other people if only to please the master from whom they expect any favour, the humble and lowly Tulsidas is shown so much respect by the world just because he is a devotee of Lord Ram, and not because he had any worthwhile qualities inherent in him.

The idea in this verse is simple. Tulsidas says that he has no good qualities in him that is of any worth, but the simple fact that he has submitted himself to Lord Ram and calls himself the Lord's humble servant or follower is enough to have elevated him to an exalted stature befitting that of a saint. This is glory of the Lord and his holy Name that even such lowly and useless creatures as Tulsidas acquire such great fame and acclaim simply by relying upon the name of the Lord, simply by calling themselves the servant of the Lord. Ever since the Lord has accepted him as his own servant or devotee, he has become so saintly, revered and an exalted one that he is respected everywhere. This verse shows Tulsidas' humility.]

स्वारथको साजु न समाजु परमारथको,
 मोसो दगाबाज दूसरो न जगजाल है।
 कै न आयों, करौ न करौंगो करतूति भली,
 लिखी न बिरंचिहूँ भलाई भूलि भाल है॥

रावरी सपथ, रामनाम ही की गति मेरें,
 इहाँ झूठो, झूठो सो तिलोक तिहूँ काल है।
 तुलसी को भलो पै तुम्हारे ही किएँ कृपाल,
 कीजै न बिलंबु बलि, पानीभरी खाल है ॥65॥

65—Tulsidas says, 'I do not possess anything to serve my interests or anything that would help in my salvation. There is no other cheat and deceitful person like me in this world. I have neither done, nor do, or shall do any good deed, even Brahma the creator had not, by oversight, destined any good for me. I swear by you, and I say truthfully oh Lord Ram that I have only your name as my only hope. If I speak a lie to you then I am a greatest liar in the three Lokas (heaven, earth, subterranean) and the three periods of time (past, present, future).'

Tulsidas says that his betterment and welfare can only be done by Lord Ram himself, so he requests the Lord not to delay further because his condition is akin to a water-filled bag made of hide. [Even as water-filled bag made of hide decays soon, so is the fate of Tulsidas. He has become old, and not much time is left. So he urges his Lord to hurry-up and waste no time in ensuring Tulsidas' emancipation and salvation.]

रागको न साजु, न बिरागु, जोग जाग जियँ
 काया नहिँ छड़ि देत ठाटिबो कुठाटको।
 मनोराजु करत अकाजु भयो आजु लगि,
 चाहे चारु चीर, पै लहै न दूकु ठाटको॥
 भयो करतारु बड़े कूरको कृपालु, पायो
 नामप्रेमु-पारसु, हौं लालची बराटको।
 'तुलसी' बनी है राम ! रावरें बनाएँ, ना तो
 धोबी-कैसो कूकरु न घरको, न घाटको ॥66॥

66—'I do not possess material comforts that would satisfy the sense organs of my body, nor do I have the eclectic virtue of renunciation or detachment (that would make me feel contented with whatever I have). I do not do Yoga (meditation) and neither do I have the benefit of performing Vedic rituals. This body of mine does not want to abandon (abstain from) bad deeds. Indulgences have created only losses and wants for me till now. The body wants to acquire and wear good clothes, but does not even get torn and tattered rags!

Oh merciful Lord! You had shown mercy even on this scoundrel. A cheap, mean and greedy man like me has laid his hands on your Holy Name which is like Paaras (a stone which converts iron into gold on touch). [Just like a greedy man would grab such a Paaras stone as the panacea for all his misfortunes, Tulsidas has grabbed and clung to your holy Name as the only solution to all his problems.]

Oh Lord Ram! All this is due to you (i.e. whatever peace, happiness, respect and comfort I have is due to your mercy and the benevolence of your holy Name). Otherwise, like a washer-man's donkey, I was neither here nor there. [I could not possibly have imagined that I will get whatever good I have if it would not have been for you.]'

ऊँचो मनु, ऊँची रुचि, भागु नीचो निपट ही,
 लोकरीति-लायक न, लंगर लबारु है।

स्वारथु अगमु परमारथकी कहा चली,
 पेटकी कठिन जगु जीवको जवारु है ।।
 चाकरी न आकरी, न खेती, न बनिज-भीख,
 जानत न कूर कछु किसब कबारु है ।
 तुलसीकी बाजी राखी रामहीके नाम, न तु
 भेंट पितरन को न मूड़हू में बारु है ।।67 ।।

67—His (Tulsidas') desires are high and inclinations are also great, but he has a very poor luck. He is not fit for society (does not know proper social behaviour and how to please the people). He very mischievous and a big-mouthed blarney (chatter-box)!

For him (Tulsidas), even serving and providing for himself is difficult—what to talk of helping others. His hunger has made the world (life and existence) very burdensome for him. He has no steady occupation and a livelihood to help him feed himself—for he does not serve anyone permanently (on a salary basis; he is unemployed), he is neither a miner (digs for gold or other precious materials), nor does he possess a field (i.e. he is not a farmer), nor is he a merchant, nor a beggar, nor knows any other kind of business or vocation.

Tulsidas' only bet is on Sri Ram's holy Name. Otherwise he is so poor and wretched that he has not a single hair on his head to offer to his dead ancestors. [That is, he is abjectly poor, except possessing the gem in the form of Lord Ram's holy Name! Therefore he has no worry whatsoever.]

अपत-उतार, अपकारको अगारु, जग
 जाकी छाँह छुएँ सहमत ब्याध-बाघको ।
 पातक-पुहुमि पालिबेको सहसाननु सो,
 काननु कपटको, पयोधि अपराधको ।।
 तुलसी-से बामको भो दाहिनो दयानिधानु,
 सुनत सिहात सब सिद्ध, साधु साधको ।
 रामनाम ललित-ललामु कियो लाखनिको,
 बड़ो कूर कायर कपूत-कौड़ी आधको ।।68 ।।

68—This wretched (Tulsidas) is so shameless and ungrateful that his evil shadow is sufficient to instil fear even among the animals who are cruel and merciless.

He (Tulsidas) is like a hundred hooded serpent (Sesh Nath) as far as bearing the burden of sins like this serpent who bears the burden of earth on its hood. He is like a forest of deceit and an ocean of errors and faults.

'Lord Ram has become benign and merciful on the mean, unwise and vain Tulsidas'—on hearing this, all the wise-ones, the saintly and holy-ones, and the spiritual seekers begin to praise Tulsidas (for his astounding good luck). Lord Ram's holy and divine Name has converted a man who is worthless, wretched, coward and deceitful, and a most unworthy son of his parents, into a person who is as worthy and valuable as a beautiful gem worth millions.

सब अंग हीन, सब साधन बिहीन मन-
 बचन मलीन, हीन कुल करतूति हों ।
 बुधि-बल-हीन, भाव-भगति-बिहीन, हीन

गुन, ग्यानहीन, हीन भाग हूँ बिभूति हौं ।।
 तुलसी गरीब की गई-बहोर रामनामु,
 जाहि जपि जीहँ रामहू को बैठे धूति हौं ।
 प्रीति रामनामसों प्रतीति रामनामकी,
 प्रसाद रामनामकें पसारि पाय सूतिहौं ।।69 ।।

69—'I lack the eightfold path of Yoga¹, all the aids and necessary things for comfortable survival in this world and liberation of the soul, am dark in mind and speech, and am very downtrodden and lowly by birth, ancestry and deeds. I lack intellect, strength, good emotions, devotion, talents, knowledge, luck and fame. Only Lord Sri Ram's holy Name can give salvation to this wretched Tulsidas. By chanting the Lord's Name I have managed to even deceive Sri Ram (into believing that I'm a great devotee and a wise-one, whereas I am good-for-nothing).

I have love, devotion and faith only in Lord Ram's holy Name, and I sleep blissfully without any worries only due to the grace of Lord Ram's Name.' [In this verse, Tulsidas praises the glory of Sri Ram's holy Name.]

[Note—¹The eight fold path of Yoga involves observance of certain principles. These are briefly the following—(1) *Yam* or self restraint of the senses; (2) *Niyam* or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) *Asana* or postures for meditation; (4) *Pranayam* or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) *Pratyahar* or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) *Dharana* or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) *Dhyan* or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect, such as visualizing the presence of the supreme Brahman in the point of the forehead between the two eyebrows; and (8) *Samadhi* or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.]

मेरे जान जबतैं हौं जीव है जनम्यो जग,
 तबतैं बेसाह्यो दाम लोह, कोह, कामको ।
 मन तिन्हीकी सेवा, तिन्ही सों भाउ नीको,
 बचन बनाइ कहौं 'हौं गुलामु रामको' ।।
 नाथहूँ न अपनायो, लोक झूठी है परी, पै
 प्रभुहूँ तैं प्रबल प्रतापु प्रभुनामको ।
 आपनी भलाई भलो कीजै तौ भलाई, न तौ
 तुलीसीको खुलैगो खजानो खोटे दामको ।।70 ।।

70—'In my (Tulsidas') view, ever since I was born, I have been held captive by such negative traits as greed, anger and lust. [That is, these have over-powered me.]

Therefore, my mind serves them and loves them deeply. As such, I only pretend when I say that I am a servant of Sri Ram. [This is because my mind serves others—my mind is engrossed in feeding its desires for more and more of the things of this world, and when it is not satisfied it becomes angry.]

Oh Lord! Even you have not accepted me because I am unworthy, but I got false fame in the world (that I am your servant—because I constantly repeat your holy Name). But the magic is that the Lord's name is more powerful than the Lord himself. So, if you

do me good because of your merciful nature, so much the better, otherwise my deceitful and cunning nature would come out in the open. [Tulsidas says that if the Lord does not willingly accept him and provide him salvation, then he would keep repeating the Lord's holy and divine Name and force the Lord to care of him just because he takes the Lord's Name inspite of his being totally unworthy of receiving any grace and mercy from the Lord! Here, Tulsidas pleads with Sri Ram to protect his honour because the glory of Sri Ram's name is at stake.]

जोग न बिरागु, जप, जाग, तप, त्यागु, ब्रत,
तीरथ न धर्म जानौ, बेदबिधि किमि है।
तुलसी-सो पोच न भयो है, नहि ह्वै कहुँ,
सोचै सब, याके अघ कैसे प्रभु छमिहैं।।
मेरें तौ न डरु, रघुबीर! सुनौ, साँची कहौ,
खल अनखैहैं तुम्हें, सज्जन न गमिहैं।
भले सुकृतीके संग मोहि तुलाँ तौलिए तौ,
नामकें प्रसाद भारु मेरी ओर नमिहैं।।71।।

71—'I do not know that eight fold path of Yoga, nor the grand virtues of renunciation, chanting of Mantras, Vedic rituals, penance, detachment, fasting and other religious observances, pilgrimage or the laws of Dharma (righteousness). I also do not know the laws of the Vedas. No one was, and shall be, as degenerate and lowly as Tulsidas is. That is why people wonder how my sins will be ever forgiven (i.e. how I shall be ever redeemed).

Oh Lord Raghubir (another name of Lord Ram since he was born in the race of king of Raghu)! Listen, I tell you the truth, that still I'm not afraid. If you forgive me, the wicked will be unhappy with you (because you would have foiled their design and intention of keeping me in their fold), but gentlemen and saintly people would be pleased (because they expect such a magnanimous and benevolent gesture from you). If you weigh me against some great man of noble deeds, the scale will tilt in my favour because I have your holy Name with me!' [Tulsidas says here that all the noble deeds are no match for Lord Ram's name, its great glory and marvelous effects.]

जातिके, सुजातिके, कुजातिके पेटागि बस
खाए दूक सबके, बिदित बात दुनी सो।
मानस-बचन-कायँ किए पाप सतिभायँ,
रामको कहाइ दासु दगाबाज पुनी सो।
रामनामको प्रभाउ, पाउ, महिमा, प्रतापु,
तुलसी-सो जग मनिअत महामुनी-सो।
अतिही अभागो, अनुरागत न रामपद,
मूढ़! एतो बड़ो अचिरिजु देखि-सुनी सो।।72।।

72—'Due to hunger, I begged from all types of people—belonging to all castes, creed, sects and clans; this fact is known to all in this world. I have committed a lot of sins by my thought, speech and deeds. And though I called myself Sri Ram's servant, I remained deceitful and cunning.

Now, look at the glory and the great effect of Lord Ram's holy Name that a wretched and rascal like Tulsidas is regarded by the world as a great and holy man (like Valmiki). Oh Idiot! You are really a fool! After seeing such a miracle, you still do not have an abiding, true and sincere love and devotion in Lord Ram's holy feet.'

जायो कुल मंगन, बधावनो बजायो, सुनि
भयो परितापु पापु जननी-जनकको ।
बारेतें ललात-बिललात द्वार-द्वार दीन,
जानत हो चारि फल चारि ही चनकको ।।
तुलसी सो साहेब समर्थको सुसेवकु है,
सुनत सिहात सोचु बिधिहूँ गनकको ।
नामुराम! रावरो सयानो किधौँ बावरो,
जो करत गिरीतें गरु तनतें तनकको ।।73 ।।

73—'I was born in a poor Brahmin household, and there were celebrations. But my parents were unhappy (because of their poverty, they regarded me as a burden—another mouth to feed). Then, since I was born in poverty, since childhood I had to wander from house to house greedily, writhing with hunger (for morsels of food). I regarded four grains of gram that I got by begging equivalent to the four celebrated fruits of wealth, dharma, fulfilled desire, and salvation.

Now Tulsidas has become a servant (devotee) of Lord Ram—on hearing this, even an astrologer like Brahma (the creator) is worried and full of envy. [Brahma is astonished that fate had destined me to ever remain wretched and lowly, then how come I have become so holy, exalted and famous? Surely, it is only due to the influence of Lord Ram's name.]

I don't know whether your name (Lord Ram's holy name) is clever and cunning, or a mad maverick, for it can make one who is even humbler-than-grass (i.e. as useless as a weed) into one who is heavier-than-a-mountain (i.e. transform the lowest of the lowly into higher than the lofty and the most exalted).'

बेदहूँ पुरान कही, लोकहूँ बिलोकिअत,
रामनाम ही सौं रीझें सकल भलाई है ।
कासीहूँ मरत उपदेसत महेसु सोई,
साधना अनेक चितई न चित लाई है ।
छाछीको ललात जे, ते रामनामकें प्रसाद,
खात, खुनसात सोंधे दूधकी मलाई है ।
रामराज सुनिअत राजनीतिकी अवधि,
नामु राम! रावरो तौ चामकी चलाई है ।।74 ।।

74—'It is said by the Vedas and the Purans as well as seen in this world that having love for Lord's Name is beneficial in every way. When one dies in Kashi (Varanasi), Lord Mahadev (Shiva) also gives salvation (by uttering this holy Name in the ears of the dying man). He (Lord Shiva) has not paid any attention to any other means (of salvation).

Those who were eager to have even butter-milk to feed their stomach (for even this humblest of food was not available to them) are now reluctant to eat scented cream of milk. [That is, those who were earlier so unfortunate that they couldn't find anything to eat or drink, are now so well and over fed that they reject the choichest of food, thanks to the glory of Sri Ram's holy and divine Name.]

In the kingdom of Sri Ram, political science is practiced in its best form! That is why oh Lord it appears that your Name has minted coins out of worthless hide (i.e. even worthless people have become valuable due to Sri Ram's holy Name). [The Lord's holy Name has given importance to worthless people so as to increase manifold the number of faithful followers of Sri Ram just like politicians pamper the vast number of ordinary and the middle class people in order to garner their support and votes.]

सोच-संकटनि सोचु संकटु परत, जर
जरत, प्रभाउ नाम ललित ललामको ।
बूझिऔ तरति बिगरीऔ सुधरति बात,
होत देखि दाहिनो सुभाउ बिधि बामको ।।
भागत अभागु, अनुरागत बिरागु, भागु
जागत आलसि तुलसीहू-से निकामको ।
धार्ई धारि फिरिकै गोहारि हितकारी होति,
आई मीचु मिटति जपत रामनामको ।।75 ।।

75—'Lord Ram's holy Name is a Mantra (a spiritual formula) that is beautiful and the best amongst all the Mantras. It has such a stupendous magical effect that worries and troubles themselves get worried and troubled, and fever itself gets tormented by heat when one invokes this eclectic and powerful Mantra. [That is, the Lord's holy Name can chase away all worries and troubles, and it can eliminate all causes of torments that afflict a devotee of the Lord.]

The Name of the Lord is so powerful and effective that it can make a drowned (sunk, submerged, capsized) boat cross over to the other side (of the river), undo things that have already been finished, and make even a malevolent and unfavourable Brahma (the creator) into one who is most favourable, benign and benevolent. Seeing a person who invokes Lord Ram's holy Name, misfortunes run away (i.e. they leave Sri Ram's devotee alone), renunciation begins to show fondness for such a man (i.e. such a person begins to inculcate the grand virtue of dispassion and renunciation, called Vairagya), and luck begins to shine upon Tulsidas who is luckless and indolent. An army of thieves becomes a protector (instead of robbing), and even death is averted by chanting Lord Ram's holy Name.'

आँधरो अधम जड़ जाजरो जराँ जवनु
सूकरकें सावक ढकाँ ढकेल्यो मगमें ।
गिरो हिउँ हहरि 'हराम हो, हराम हन्यो',
हाय! हाय! करत परीगो कालफगमें ।।
'तुलसी' बिसोक है त्रिलोकपतिलोक गयो
नामकें प्रताप, बात बिदित है जगमें ।
सोई रामनामु जो सनेहसों जपत जनु,
ताकी महिमा क्यों कही है जाति अगमें ।।76 ।।

76—A young piglet pushed a sinful, blind, idiotic and an old wretched Muslim on the way. He fell down and started crying ‘Oh! This Haraam (an abusive expletive) has killed me’, and so crying, he died. Tulsidas says that the Muslim was rid of all sorrows, and he went straight to the holy abode of Lord Ram—this is well known in this world. [The word ‘Haraam’ has 2 parts : Ha+Ram. So Tulsidas says that though he was abusing the piglet, the very pronouncement of Sri Ram’s name ‘Ram’, even if un-intentionally and as part of an abuse, was enough to liberate the Muslim man and give him deliverance.]

The same Lord Ram’s holy Name, if chanted with love and devotion, can naturally do wonders. Say, who can describe its great glories?

जापकी न तप-खपु कियो, न तमाइ जोग,
जाग न बिराग, त्याग, तीरथ न तनको ।
भाईको भरोसो न खरो-सो बैरु बैरीहू सों,
बलु अपनो न, हितू जननी न जनको ॥
लोकको न डरु, परलोकको न सोचु, देव-
सेवा न सहाय, गर्बु धामको न धनको ।
रामही के नामते जो होई सोई नीको लागै,
ऐसोई सुभाउ कछु तुलसीके मनको ॥77॥

77—‘I had never chanted or repeated the Lord’s holy Mantras (i.e. I have never done Japa), nor have I undergone the hardships of Tapasya (i.e. I have not done penances and observed austerities), and I have no desire for doing Yoga (meditation practices), Yagya (rituals of fire sacrifice), Vairagya (the virtue of renunciation), Tyag (to leave all attachments), and Tirath (going on pilgrimage).

I do not have reliance (faith) in my brother (i.e. I do not expect that my brother would ever come to my aid when needed), nor do I have any enmity towards my enemy (i.e. though I have no animosity towards my enemy, he still won’t come to help me). I have no support of my own strength, nor do I have helpful parents. But inspite of such loneliness and lack of support from any quarter, I have no fear either of this world nor any worry of the one after death. I have no strength that is usually derived by doing service to the Gods (for I have never served anyone except Sri Ram). I also have nothing to be proud of as far as wealth and property is concerned.’

Tulsidas says that his natural habit, tendency and temperament are such that whatever happens (or is achieved) on the strength of, or by the virtue of Lord Ram’s holy Name appears good for him, and is gladly acceptable by him.

ईसु न, गनेसु न, दिनेसु न, धनेसु न,
सुरेसु, सुर, गौरि, गिरपति नहि जपने ।
तुम्हरेई नामको भरोसो भव तरिबेको,
बैठे-उठे, जागत-बागत, सोएँ, सपने ॥
तुलसी है बावरो सो रावरोई रावरी सौं,
रावरेऊ जानि जियँ कीजिए जु अपने ।
जानकीरमन मेरे! रावरें बदनू फेरें,
ठाउँ न समाउँ कहाँ, सकल निरपने ॥78॥

78—I will not chant the name of Shiva, Ganesh, Sun, Kuber, Indra, Devas, Gauri or Brahma etc. (i.e. I shall not worship any one other Lord except my beloved Lord Sri Ram).

In this world, oh Lord, I have only your (Sri Ram's) name as my succour and support while awake, asleep, wandering, sitting or dreaming etc. It is the only means by which I can get liberation and deliverance.

Though Tulsidas is (considered) mad, but I swear oh Lord that he is yours. [Tulsidas affirms his loyalty towards Lord Ram.] Keeping this in mind you (Sri Ram) should accept him.

Oh my dear Janki Raman (Sita's Lord, Sri Ram)! [By using the word 'Jankiraman', Tulsidas wants to say that Sri Ram is as dear to him as he is to Janki or Sita, the Lord's divine consort.] If you turn away from me, I shall have no place to live; all the people except you are strangers for me.'

[The reader should not be confused by the use of 'I' and 'Tulsidas' simultaneously. The speaker is Tulsidas himself. Sometimes he speaks in the first person narrative, and sometimes in the third person. Similarly, it would be often seen that he addresses himself with the pronoun 'he' as if he was addressing or referring to a second or a third person. This is his typical style of writing. In all these cases, Tulsidas is addressing only himself, but in such a manner that makes it appear that he is an independent observer.]

जाहिर जहानमें जमानो एक भाँति भयो,
बैचिए बिबुधधेनु रासभी बेसाहिए।
ऐसेऊ कराल कलिकालमें कृपाल! तेरे
नामकेँ प्रताप न त्रिताप तन दाहिए।।
तुलसी तिहारो मन-बचन-करम, तेंहि
नारें नेह-नेमु निज ओरतें निबाहिए।
रंकके नेवाज रघुराज! राजा राजनिके,
उमरि दराज महाराज तेरी चाहिए।।79।।

79—This current era of Kaliyug has become famous for the foolishness of buying a donkey by selling a Kamdhenu cow (which is an all wish-fulfilling priceless cow from whom all desired objects can be obtained). [It means that people have become so stupid out of ignorance that they do not mind exchanging a most valuable thing for something that is worthless.]

Oh merciful Lord! Even in such an era (Kaliyug), it is the glory and greatness of your holy Name that the body does not burn in the 3-fires (known as the Traitap). [These three torments are called 'Daivik' or that caused due to malignant gods and stars, 'Daihik' or those created by old age and diseases, and 'Bhautik' or those caused by worldly and existential problems.]

Tulsidas says, 'I am your devotee by thought, speech, deeds and actions (i.e. in all possible and imaginable ways). Due to this, I expect you to reciprocate, i.e. be loyal towards your ardent devotee, and be biased in favour of me. Oh benefactor of the poverty-stricken, the King of kings, and the great King of Raghu's Dynasty (i.e. Sri Ram)! We pray that you live long (so that we live under your benevolent protection forever).'

स्वारथ सयानप, प्रपंचु परमास्थ,
 कहायो राम! रावरो हौं, जानत जहान है।
 नामकें प्रताप बाप! आजु लौं निबाही नीकें,
 आगेको गोसाईं! स्वामी सबल सुजान है॥
 कलिकी कुचालि देखि दिन-दिन दूनी, देव!
 पाहरुई चोर हेरि हिए हहरान है।
 तुलसीकी, बलि, बार-बारहीं सँभार कीबी,
 जद्यपि कृपानिधानु सदा सावधान है॥80॥

80—'I am alert, clever and wise where my self interest is involved, and un-interested, evasive and indifferent where others are concerned. Oh Sri Ram! Still I am called 'yours' and the world knows me as such. Oh Father! Your name has sustained me till now, and oh Lord, for the future also, you are all-knowing and fully capable of sustaining me. Oh Lord! Seeing the cunningness and deceit of Kaliyug increase day by day, and finding the sentry (guard) a thief, my heart has shaken (I am very afraid that there is no way for salvation for me, and I'll be robbed of it). [Kaliyug is very cunning, and it throws such illusions of charm and happiness that a creature remains trapped in its quagmire. Tulsidas says that whatever good virtues he possesses are under threat of getting lost under the onslaught of the evil effects of Kaliyug.] '

Tulsidas prays that though the Lord is always alert and he needn't remind the Lord over and over again, but still he can't have patience and reminds him (the Lord) to please take special care of Tulsidas constantly (so that he gets liberation and deliverance).

दिन-दिन दूनो देखि दारिद्र, दुकालु, दुखु,
 दुरितु दुराजु सुख-सुकृत सकोच है।
 मागें पैत पावत पचारि पातकी प्रचंड,
 कालकी करालता, भलेको होत पोच है॥
 आपनैं तौ एकु अवलंबु अंब डिंभ ज्यों,
 समर्थ सीतानाथ सब संकट बिमोच है।
 तुलसीकी साहसी सराहिए कृपाल राम!
 नामकें भरोसैं परिनामको निसोच है॥81॥

81—Seeing the multifold growth of poverty, bad times, sorrows, sins and bad governance, the (virtues of) happiness and good and noble deeds are feeling shy and hesitant. [That is, during the evil times of Kaliyug, good virtues become eclipsed under the dark shadow of evil and perversions.]

Times have become so bad that rascals get their wishes fulfilled by sheer muscle-power, but good people suffer. Just as a child has its mother as the only hope and succour so does Tulsidas have only Sri Ram as the only liberator from all the troubles that confront him. The Lord is his only all-able benefactor. Oh merciful Lord Ram! Praise the courage and faith of Tulsidas who has become free from all worries relying solely on the strength of your holy Name. [Tulsidas tells the Lord to pay special attention on him because he is totally dependent upon the Lord's holy Name in all spheres of life, and if any wrong happens to Tulsidas the Lord would not be able to wash off this ignominy and scar for all times to come.]

मोह-मद मात्यो, रात्यो कुमति-कुनारिसों,
 बिसारि बेद-लोक-लाज, आँकरो अचेतु है।
 भावे सो करत, मुँह आवै सो कहत, कछु
 काहूकी सहत नाहिं, सरकस हेतु है॥
 तुलसी अधिक अधमाई हू अजामिलतैं,
 ताहूमें सहाय कलि कपटनिकेतु है।
 जैबेको अनेक टेक, एक टेक हैबेकी, जो
 पेट-प्रियपूत हित रामनामु लेतु है॥82॥

82—'He (Tulsidas) has become arrogant due to the pride (intoxicating effects) of various possessions, is indulgent in a wife (woman) represented by ignorance, and is careless enough to neglect the sanctity and teachings of the Vedas and good society (of saints). He does what he wants (without thinking), says what comes to his mouth, and because of arrogance, does not pay heed to anyone.'

Tulsidas says that he is more evil than Ajaamil, and to add to all his predicaments, 'Kali' (the personified form of Kaliyug)—who is a treasury of deceit and fraud—is his helper and assistant.

There are many paths to ruin but only one path for salvation, and it is the path of chanting the holy and divine Name of Lord Sri Ram. But Tulsidas uses it to satisfy the needs of the stomach (i.e. his hunger) by employing it to beg for food and other necessities of life. [He means that just like Ajaamil had called the Lord's name while he was actually calling his son 'Narain' at the time of death when the messengers of Yam, the god of death and hell, began to torture him, Tulsidas also chants Sri Ram's name just so that he can get something to eat and fulfill the needs of his mortal body. But the Lord is so merciful that though his Name is pronounced for other reasons, he still keeps the sanctity of the holy Name and provides salvation to the caller.]

रामु बिहाइ 'मरा' जपतैं बिगरी सुधरी कबिकोकिलहू की।
 नामहि तैं गजकी, गनिकाकी, अजामिलकी चलि गै चलचूकी॥
 नामप्रताप बड़ैं कुसमाज बजाइ रही पति पांडुबधूकी।
 ताको भलो अजहूँ 'तुलसी' जेहि प्रीति-प्रतीति है आखर दूकी॥89॥

89—By reciting Lord Ram's name in the reverse, the great poet Valmiki turned from a savage to a sage¹. Gaja (the Elephant) and Ganika (the harlot/prostitute) got liberation/protection on the strength of Sri Ram's holy Name, and so was also the case with Ajaamil. Helpless Draupadi's dignity and self-respect was maintained in Duryodhan's court only on the strength of Lord's name. [This refers to an episode from the epic Mahabharat.]

Tulsidas says that those who love and devote themselves to the two syllables 'Ra' and 'Ma' of His Lord's holy name, can have welfare, solace and succour here and now. (See also verse 88).

[Note—This verse primarily shows how Tulsidas sees his beloved Sri Ram everywhere, in all forms and in every incarnation, and regards all the various names of God as meaning the same word 'Ram'. Here, Draupadi had prayed to Lord Sri Krishna, but for Tulsidas there is no difference between Krishna and Sri Ram. Similarly, in stanza no 2, both the Elephant and Ajaamil had called

‘Narayan’—one of the many names of Lord Vishnu. But Tulsidas sees his Ram there also. This also goes to prove the ‘oneness’ of the various forms by which the Supreme Being is known and perceived. The Absolute Truth transcends all barriers which are essentially man-made, and these artificial barriers and constraints have nothing to do with the Divinity.

¹Sage *Valmiki* is well known for his classical work known as the Ramayana, which is his magnum opus. He is also credited with penning Advhut Ramayan in which Sita had assumed the form of Maha Kali to kill the Ravana with a thousand heads. His brief life is narrated in the Glossary given in appendix no. 2 of this book at the end.]

नामु अजामिल-से खल तारन, तारन बारन-बारबधूको ।
नाम हरे प्रहलाद-बिषाद, पिता-भय-साँसति सागरु सूको ।।
नामसों प्रीति-प्रतीति बिहीन गिल्यो कलिकाल कराल, न चूको ।
राखिहैं रामु सो जासु हिउँ तुलसी हुलसै बलु आखर दूको ।। 90 ।।

90—The holy name of Lord Sri Ram can salvage the evil ones like Ajaamil, and liberate those like Gaja (the elephant) and the prostitute (Ganika). It was the ‘Name’ that destroyed the sorrows of Prahalad, and dried up (i.e. extinguished, eliminated) the ocean of fear and torments that his father (Hiranyakashipu) subjected him to. Those who do not have faith and love for the holy Name of Sri Ram are sure to be gobbled up by the terrible Kaliyug.

Tulsidas says that those in whose heart the strength of the two letters ‘Ra’ and ‘Ma’ arises, Lord Ram would surely and steadfastly protect them.

जीव जहानमें जायो जहाँ, सो तहाँ, ‘तुलसी’ तिहुँ दाह दहो है ।
दोसु न काहू, कियो अपनो, सपनेहुँ नहीं सुखलेसु लहो है ।
रामके नामतेँ होउ सो होउ, न सोउ हिउँ, रसना हीँ कहो है ।
कियो न कछू, करिबो न कछू, कहिबो न कछू, मरिबोइ रहो है ।। 91 ।।

91—Tulsidas says— ‘Wherever a creature takes birth in this world, he keeps burning in the three Traitaps (Adhibhautik, Adhyatmik and Adidaivic). No one is to blame for it, for all this is the result of one’s own deeds, and this is the reason why one doesn’t find any happiness even in one’s dreams. If anything good is ever expected, it would be only due to the good (positive) effects of Lord Ram’s divine and holy Name, but the irony is that I don’t take that Name with conviction in my heart. I chant it (mechanically, superficially) only from my tongue. [That is, though one chants the Lord’s name by his tongue, his heart lacks faith and conviction. Obviously, this is like a half-hearted devotion, and the result would also be half of what is expected.]

Besides this, I have done nothing good till date, and shall not hope to do anything good in the future. I don’t have anything more to say (as a justification for my assertions and observations). Now the only thing left to do is to die (out of shame).’

[Note—In this verse Tulsidas is admonishing others indirectly by addressing himself. He means to say that people suffer in this world inspite of apparently

being doing the right things, being religious, repeating holy Mantras etc., but they are doing none of them sincerely and with honesty. They pretend to do things rightly but only till the time doing them rightly does not hurt them; they pretend to be religious because it makes them respected in society; they repeat the Mantras only to get some worldly gains and immunity from malignant stars or neutralize their negative effects. Then, even this repeating of the holy Name of the Lord is done mechanically—they are just doing it because they must do it, or because they have heard that by chanting this holy Name all their problems will be taken care of, and so on and so forth.

But this has no desired effect because they have no conviction, selfless devotion and love for the Lord; they have not submitted themselves completely to the Lord, but are repeating the Lord's name only to serve their interests. How then can they expect the full rewards that the Lord's holy and divine Name brings?]

जीजे न ठाउँ, न आपन गाउँ, सुरालयहू को न संबलु मेरें।
 नामुरटो, जमबास क्यों जाउँ को आइ सकै जमकिंकरु नेरें॥
 तुम्हरो सब भाँति तुम्हारिअ सौं, तुम्ह ही बलि हौ मोको ठाहरु हेरें।
 बैरख बाँह बसाइए पै तुलसी-घरु ब्याध-अजामिल-खेरें॥ 92॥

92—'I do not have any certainty of life. I do not have any village which I can call my own (I have no permanent abode or address), nor any arrangements to go to heaven. I have chanted Lord Ram's name, so how can I go to hell either? Which messenger of Yam can approach me in this state? [Since I have been chanting the holy Name of Ram, the messengers of Yam cannot catch hold of me].

I swear by you (Sri Ram)—by all counts, I am yours, and you are my only strength, succour and refuge. Hence, please accommodate Tulsidas in the same camp as you had done the hunter Vyadh and Ajaamil, and bring me under the protection of your arms by declaring me as one of your own.'

का कियो जोगु अजामिलजू, गनिकाँ कबहीं मति पेम पगाई।
 ब्याधको साधुपनो कहिए, अपराध अगाधनि में ही जनाई॥
 करुनाकरकी करुना करुना हित, नाम-सुहेत जो देत दगाई।
 काहेको खीझिअ, रीझिअ पै, तुलसीहु सौं है, बलिसोइ सगाई॥ 93॥

93—'What Yoga did Ajaamil do, and when did the whore (Ganika, Pingla) soak her mind in your (Sri Ram's) love and devotion? Say, tell me how saintly was the hunter (Vyadh) who was always seen committing heinous crimes. The virtues of graciousness, benevolence and magnanimity that are characteristics of Lord Sri Ram are naturally meant to be all-encompassing and all-accepting in as much as everyone can enjoy them, and no special qualities are required to benefit from them. If anyone tries to cheat you (Sri Ram) by chanting your name deceitfully (without devotion or sincerity), oh Sri Ram, why do you become angry at him (because, at least, he is chanting the purifying name, and secondly, how can he remain deceitful once he has pronounced your holy name)?

Please have mercy on him. The same rule (as described above) applies to Tulsidas as well, and he sacrifices himself upon you expecting your mercy.' [Very clever, indeed!]

जे मद-मार-बिकार भरे, ते अचार-बिचार समीप न जाहीं ।
है अभिमानु तऊ मनमें, जनु भाषिहै दूसरे दीनन पाहीं ? ॥
जौं कछु बात बनाइ कहौं, तुलसी तुम्हमें, तुम्हहू उर माहीं ।
जानकीजीवन! जानत हौ, हम हैं तुम्हरे, तुम्ह में, सकु नाहीं ॥ 94 ॥

94—"Those evil men who are full of taints and negative traits such as having pride, arrogance and haughtiness, as well as lust and yearnings—they don't have anything to do with positive qualities and the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety and rightful conduct. This Tulsidas is no different, but he (Tulsidas) has this pride (which is worthy) that, excepting you (Sri Ram), he shall not beg from any other wretched one (either men or any God).'

Tulsidas says, 'If I say anything which is wrong, untruthful and cooked-up, then I can't conceal anything from you (Lord Ram) since you reside in my heart and I in yours. Therefore, I can't hide anything from you. Oh Janki Jeevan (i.e. the dear Lord of Sita for whom Sri Ram is her life and soul)! You know it very well that I am yours and dwell in you (your heart)—there is no doubt about it.'

[Note—This statement of Tulsidas refers to the eclectic philosophy of the Upanishads which stress on the one-ness of the individual soul known as the Atma with the supreme Soul of creation known as the Parmatma. It also emphasizes that Tulsidas knows that Sri Ram is the Supreme Atma, the Parmatma, living in his own heart as the Atma. He also knows that the Lord loves him very much because the former resides in the heart of Tulsidas. Only someone who is extremely dear to a person finds a place in his heart. Tulsidas' self-confidence and conviction that Sri Ram loves him and resides in his heart is very inspiring.]

दानव-देव, अहीस-महीस, महामुनि-तापस, सिद्ध-समाजी ॥
जग-जाचक, दानि दुतीय नहीं, तुम्ह ही सबकी सब राखत बाजी ॥
एते बड़े तुलसीस! तऊ सबरीके दिए बिनु भूख न भाजी ।
राम गरीबनेवाज! भए हौ गरीबनेवाज गरीब नेवाजी ॥ 95 ॥

95—"Demons, Gods, Sheshnath and other kings of serpents and men, great sages, those who perform penances and austerities, and mystics—every one in this world is a beggar or a seeker. There is no greater donor than you (Lord Sri Ram); you give success to all (fulfill their desires).

Oh Lord of Tulsidas! Though you are so great and exalted, you satisfied your hunger by eating already-tested plums offered to you by Sabari. [That is, you did not think that the plums are defiled because they had been bitten and tasted by Sabari earlier. You are so simple and down-to-earth; you have no airs about you; you do not have a trace of arrogance and hypocrisy in your behaviour. You gave precedence to the love the old lady have for you than being fussy about the plums not being fresh.]

Oh Sri Ram, the sustainer of the wretched, the poor and the distressed! You have earned the title of the 'Protector of the Poor' by protecting them (so, live up to your reputation and protect me).'

किसबी, किसान-कुल, बनिक, भिखारी, भाट,
चाकर, चपल नट, चोर, चार, चेटकी।
पेटको पढ़त, गुन गढ़त, चढ़त गिरि,
अटत गहन-गन अहन अखेटकी।।
ऊँचे-नीचे करम, धरम-अधरम करि,
पेट ही को पचत, बेचत बेटा-बेटकी।
'तुलसी' बुझाइ एक राम घनस्याम ही तैं,
आगि बड़वागितैं बड़ी है आगि पेटकी।। 96।।

96—Labourers, farmers, traders and businessman, beggars, court singers and royal bards, servants, agile and expert (circus) artists, thieves, messengers, and a magician—all of them study for their stomach—i.e. they acquire education and respective skill to earn a living or feed themselves. They try all sorts of tricks, climb a mountain and roam in dense forests for prey—i.e. they can go to any extent to feed their stomachs or earn a livelihood. Everyone does good or bad deeds, adopt and follow righteous or un-righteous path to feed their stomachs—so much so that they even sell their own sons and daughters for it.

Tulsidas says that the fire stoked by hunger (of stomach) is greater (more irresistible and ferocious) than the fire of dooms-day; it can only be doused by the rain of dark clouds represented by the form (image) of Sri Ram. [Worldly needs have no end. Desire can never be satisfied. Devotion for Lord Ram and its attendant contentedness are the only remedy from the endless cycle of wants and desires.]

खेती न किसानको, भिखारीको न भीख, बलि,
बनिकको बनिज, न चाकरको चाकरी।
जीविका बिहीन लोग सीद्यमान सोच बस,
कहैं एक एकन सों 'कहाँ जाई, का करी ?'
बेदहूँ पुरान कही, लोकहूँ बिलोकिअत,
साँकरे सबै पै, राम! रावरें कृपा करी।
दारिद-दसानन दबाई दुनी, दीनबंधु!
दुरित-दहन देखि तुलसी हहा करी।। 97।।

97—(Tulsidas says) :- 'Oh Sri Ram! I swear by you—in the present time, the farmers can't have proper harvest, beggars don't get alms, traders don't succeed in business (their business runs in loss), and those seeking service (a job) can't get it. In this way, being deprived of any means of livelihood, they become agitated, distressed and sorrowful, and tell each other 'what shall we do, where shall we go—there seems to be no solution'. The Vedas and the Purans say, and it is also generally observed in this world, that you (Sri Ram) are the one who has helped all in times of troubles and needs. Oh friend of the distressed! The poverty in the form of Ravana has oppressed the world, and seeing the fire of sins all around, Tulsidas laments (and in all humility and sincerity asks you to help the people oppressed and tormented by misfortunes and evil times).'

कुल-करतूति-भूति-कीरति-सुरूप-गुन-
 जोबन जरत जुड़, परे न कल कहीं ।
 राजकाजु कुपथु, कुसाज भोग रोग ही के,
 बेद-बुध बिद्या पाइ बिबस बलकहीं ॥
 गति तुलसीकी लखै न कोउ, जो करत
 पबब्यतें छार, छारै पबबय पलक ही ।
 कासों कीजै रोषु, दोषु दीजै काहि, पाहि राम !
 कियो कलिकाल कुलि खललु खलक ही ॥ 98 ॥

98—All are burning (and destroying themselves in envy, jealousy and haughtiness) in the fire of the pride of their superior clan (birth), their deeds, their fame/renown, their healthy and handsome body, their charm and beauty, their virtues and qualities, and their youthfulness—but there is no ‘tap’ available to douse this raging fire. [Tap refers metaphorically to a hydrant or any other source of water that can douse the fire represented by the negative traits listed above. In other words, this symbolic fire keep on burning inside all the creatures and burns them from within.]

This internal fire represented by the above negative qualities is like a disease that burns the creature from within. For this disease, the worldly deeds that one is forced to do as necessary part of life and the various pleasures of the sense organs that one enjoys are like food that is not supposed to be eaten by a sick person suffering from such a horrible disease. [When one is suffering from fever represented by the ‘fire’ and is sick with such negative signs of a serious ‘disease’ as mentioned in this verse, he must take complete rest and eat regulated and bland diet as prescribed by the doctor. If a man continues to work when suffering from fever, and eats things he is not supposed to eat, then surely he will suffer greatly.]

Remaining engrossed in the affairs of the mundane world just in order to feed the stomach or please one’s worldly master, and being indulgent in different and myriad types of pleasures of the sense organs as well as remaining hooked to the sense objects of this mundane and deluding world would only increase this disease, and no way reduce it.

Even those who have acquired the knowledge of the Vedas (i.e. are supposed to be enlightened and wise) lament and wail. [It means that not only the ordinary people are burning in the fire of ego, haughtiness etc. which is stoked by worldly duties and fanned by indulgences in the sense organs and materials of the world, but even those people who pride themselves in the knowledge of the Vedas are not spared—they have become wild with hypocrisy and arrogance too].

No one knows what Tulsidas’ Lord Sri Ram can do—he can convert a mountain into a heap of rubble, and vice-versa, in a moment. Considering all this, who can be blamed and on whom should one become angry. This era of Kaliyug created turbulence (moral dilemma and social upheaval) in the entire world. So, Oh Sri Ram! Protect us! [Basically Tulsidas appeals to Lord Ram to help the people by lending them support to overcome the over-powering evil effects of the present era of Kaliyug which is dominated by negativity and delusions. Nothing worthwhile is achievable without the grace of Lord Ram.]

बबुर-बहेरेको बनाइ बागु लाइयत,
 रूँधिबेको सोइ सुरतरु काटियतु है।
 गारी देत नीच हरिचंदहू दधीचिहू को,
 आपने चना चबाइ हाथ चाटियतु है॥
 आपु महापातकी, हँसत हरि-हरहू को,
 आपु है अभागी, भूरिभागी डाटियतु है।
 कलिको कलुष मन मलिन किए महत,
 मसककी पाँसुरी पयोधि पाटियतु है॥ 99॥

99—People have been so entangled or ensnared by Kaliyug (i.e. their wisdom and common sense has declined so much) that they plant useless trees of ‘Acacia’ and ‘Baheer’ (belleric-myrobalam), and to protect them, make a surrounding hedges (enclosures) using cut-down branches of the (most valuable tree known as the) ‘Kalpa Tree’ (which is the all wish-filling celestial tree of Gods).

People have become so evil and low (base, mean) that they even abuse (speak-ill) of Harischandra (the legendary king renowned for his truthfulness and adherence to duty) and Dadhichi (who sacrificed his bones for Indra to mould his invincible Vajra out of it to kill a demon). They eat all the grains in their hands and then lick their palms (to see if any residue is left over—i.e. they have become extremely greedy and impoverished). They themselves are great sinners but laugh at and deride Lord Vishnu and Shiva. They are luckless themselves, but out of jealousy and envy they admonish and scorn at those who are extremely lucky.

The effect of Kaliyug has made the minds of all very dark and ignorant so much so that they try to fill the vast ocean by the bones of dead mosquitoes! [What a ridiculous and incongruous state of affair, wonders Tulsidas. How stupid the people of the current generation have become. He means that the people have become so stupid that they have abandoned having devotion and love for Lord Ram, and instead spend their lifetimes pursuing the deluding world and its equally false charms and pleasures.]

सुनिए कराल कलिकाल भूमिपाल! तुम्ह,
 जाहि घालो चाहिए, कहौ धौं राखै ताहि को।
 हौं तौ दीन दूबरो, बिगारो-ढारो रावरो न,
 मैहू तैहू ताहिको, सकल जगु जाहिको॥
 काम, कोहू लाइ कै देखाइयत आँखि मोहि,
 एते मान अकसु कीबेको आपु आहि को॥
 साहेबु सुजान, जिन्ह स्वानहूँ को पछु कियो,
 रामबोला नामु, हौं गुलामु रामसाहिको॥ 100॥

100—(Addressing Kaliyug, the present era dominated by evil, vices, pretensions, deceit and negativism, with immense sarcasm, Tulsidas calls it a ‘Lord’—meaning great and powerful—and then says—) ‘Oh Lord, the great and terrible Kaliyug! Listen. Who can be saved if you want to destroy him? I am a very poor and a wretched being, and I have not caused you any harm or offence. Both of us—you and me—belong to the same ‘One’ (God) who is the Lord of this entire world (creation). You have put lust, desire and anger to pursue me like a hound—say, who are you to scowl at me and have so much aggression towards me? My Lord Sri Ram is very wise (i.e. he knows everything), he had

done justice to even a dog. I am a servant of such a munificent and benevolent Lord whose name is 'Ram', and that is why my own name is 'Rambola'¹. [That is, I am closely identified by Lord Ram and inseparably belong to him so much so that I am called by a name with the Lord's name 'Ram' attached as a prefix.] Why will then Lord Ram not take my side (and protect me from your evil intentions, and do justice to me as well)?

[Note—¹*Rambola* was the name given to Tulsidas by the people when he went around begging for food when his parents died when he was very young. He used to call out 'Ram-Ram' during his rounds, and so the people gave him this nickname.]

साँची कहौ, कलिकाल कराल! मैं ढारो-बिगारो तिहारो कहा है।
कामको, कोहको, लोभको, मोहको मोहिसों आनि प्रपंचु रहा है॥
हौ जगनायकु लायक आजु, पै मेरिऔ टेव कुटेव महा है।
जानकीनाथ बिना 'तुलसी' जग दूसरेसों करिहौ न हहा है॥101॥

101—'Oh terrible and mischievous Kaliyug! Say truthfully, what harm have I caused you that you are giving me so much trouble? Was I the only one left for you to cast your net of lust, desire, anger, greed and allurements of attachments with the sole purpose of ensnaring me who is so humble and helpless? You are the Lord of the present world (present times) and are very able (resourceful). But oh Lord! It is my very bad habit that I too do not beg in front of anyone else except my Lord Sri Ram if I have to ask for getting protection. [So don't expect me to be servile before you; don't expect that your threatening overtures are going to cow me down and make me surrender before you. I will never surrender before anyone but Lord Ram. He is there to afford me protection, so I don't really care for you, remember!']

भागीरथी-जलु पान करौ, अरु नाम कै रामके लेत नितै हौं।
मोको न लेनो, न देनो कछू, कलि! भूलि न रावरी ओर चितैहौं॥
जानि कै जोरु करौ, परिनाम तुम्है पछितैहौ, पै मैं न भितैहौं।
ब्राह्मन ज्यों उगिल्यो उरगारि, हौं त्यों ही तिहारें हिउँ नहितैहौं॥102॥

102—'I drink water from the holy river Ganges and take Ram's holy Name daily. Oh Kaliyug! I have nothing to do with you and will not look towards you even by mistake (i.e. don't imagine that I will even un-wittingly plead before you). If you willingly torment me and commit excesses, you shall repent for it. I won't be scared of you. Like Garuda (the mount of Vishnu) could not digest a Brahmin whom he had swallowed and had to vomit him out, I too would not get digested in your stomach (and you too would have to let me out). [It means that you cannot harm me in any way. So let me be alone!']

राजमरालके बालक पेलि कै पालत-लालत खूसरको।
सुचि सुंदर सालि सकेलि, सो बारि कै, बीजु बटोरत ऊसरको॥
गुन-ग्यान-गुमानु, भँभेरि बड़ी, कलपद्रुमु काटत मूसरको।
कलिकाल बिचारु अचारु हरो, नहिं सूझै कछू धमधूसरको॥103॥

103—The (foolish) people push aside the young ones of a swan and nourish those of owls; they collect and burn the best of cereals and (collect and) store seeds for planting in

the moor (barren field). [They destroy useful things and hoard worthless ones]. They are very proud of their knowledge and qualities; they cut the priceless KalpaTree to make an ordinary wooden pestle or pounder. Kaliyug has stolen (eliminated, eclipsed, decimated) proper thoughts and behaviour; this is why the ignorant have become blind—i.e. they can't see what is good or bad for them.

कीबे कहा, पढ़िबेको कहा फलु, बूझि न बेदको भेदु बिचारै ।
स्वास्थ्यको परमाथको कलि कामद रामको नामु बिसारै ।।
बाद-बिबाद बिषादु बढाई कै छाती पराई औ आपनी जारै ।
चारिहुको, छहुको, नवको, दस-आठको पादु कुकादु ज्यो फारै ।।104 ।।

104—People do not understand the essential meaning (essence) of the Vedas, what duties they prescribe, and what the fruit of studying them is. They have abandoned the Kalpa Tree-like Sri Ram's holy Name which is the only way in Kaliyug that can serve one's self-interest as well as provide him with emancipation and salvation. They unnecessarily indulge in debates due to false pride of being highly knowledgeable (intelligent, educated), and enhance mutual animosity, envy and jealousy.

After studying the four Vedas, the six Shastras, the nine branches of Sanskrit grammar, and the eighteen Purans¹, they have put the knowledge to naught like a man sawing a worthless piece of wood. [When a saw cuts through wood, it produces wood-dust. Similarly, these people cut through the tomes of knowledge contained in the voluminous scriptures only to produce worthless knowledge which is equivalent to dust, instead of using it for some constructive purpose].

[Note—¹(i) The 4 Vedas are—Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva. (ii) The 6 Shastras are—Siksha, Vyakarna, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotisa, Kalpa (these are also called Vedangas). (iii) The 9 Grammars are enunciated by and named after the following sages—Indra, Chandra, Kashkritasna, Shaktayan, Apishali, Panini, Amar, Jaynenra and Saraswati. (iv) The 18 Purans are—Brahama, Padma, Vishnu, Vayu, Bhagvata, Naradiya, Markandey, Agni, Bhavishya, Brahavaivarta, Linga, Varaha, Skanda, Vamana, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda and Brahamanand].

आगम, बेद, पुरान बखानत मारग कोटिन, जाहिं न जाने ।
जे मुनि ते पुनि आपुहि आपुको ईसु कहावत सिद्ध सयाने ।।
धर्म सबै कलिकाल ग्रसे, जप, जोग, बिरागु लै जीव पराने ।
को करि सोचु मरै 'तुलसी', हम जानकीनाथके हाथ बिकाने ।।105 ।।

105—Vedas, Shastras and Purans narrate myriads of ways for salvation, and the sages and hermits call themselves Gods and Siddhas (the attained ones) as well as wise and enlightened.

All righteousness has been swallowed by Kaliyug, and all the Japs (chanting of the holy Mantras), Yog (meditation) and Vairagya (renunciation, detachments) have run away for the fear of their lives (i.e. they have vanished). Tulsidas says that there is no use mourning for them. 'I (Tulsidas) have sold myself in the hands of Sri Ram.' [Tulsidas

says that he has surrendered himself before Lord Ram, and therefore he is protected by the Lord himself. So, he has nothing to fear from.]

धूत कहौ, अवधूत कहौ, रजपूत कहौ, जोलहा कहौ कोऊ।
 काहूकी बेटीसों बेटा न ब्याहब, काहूकी जाति बिगार न सोऊ॥
 तुलसीसरनाम गुलामु है रामको, जाको रुचै सो कहै कछु ओऊ।
 माँगि कै खैबो, मसीतको सोइबो, लैबोको एकु न दैबेको दोऊ॥106॥

106—"Whether anyone calls me a miscreant or a rascal, or an exalted and wise one, or even a Rajput (and upper class warrior, usually a king) or a weaver (a low caste man)—I don't need to marry my daughter to anyone's son nor do I intend to establish any relations with anyone. [So, why and how come I am expected to appease anyone and bother about what they say about me?]

Tulsidas is a famous slave (a devout follower, devotee) of Lord Sri Ram, so let anyone say whatever he thinks fit. I have to beg to feed myself, and sleep in a shrine. I do not have to take nor give anything from anyone.' [Hence, I don't bother about the people of the world, and what they say.]

मेरें जाति-पाँति न चहौं काहूकी जाति-पाँति,
 मेरे कोऊ कामको न हौं काहूके कामको।
 लोकु परलोकु रघुनाथही के हाथ सब,
 भारी है भरोसो तुलसीके एक नामको॥
 अति ही अयाने उपखानो नहि बूझैं लोग,
 'साह ही को गोतु गोतु होत है गुलामको'॥
 साधु कै असाधु, कै भलो कै पोच, सोचु कहा,
 का काहूके द्वार परौं, जो हौं सो हौं रामको॥107॥

107—"I have no caste and neither do I wish to find out about the caste of others. No one is of any use to me and neither do I wish to be of any use to others. My entire destiny (Lok-Parlok) and existence is in the hands of Lord Ram. Tulsidas has the only reliance and succour in the name of Sri Ram. The people are utterly foolish—they do not understand that the 'Gotra' (race, caste) of the servant is the same as that of his master. I do not bother whether I am called a saint or not, or whether I am called good or bad. Whatever and howsoever I am, I belong to Sri Ram. Am I lying at the doorstep of anybody? Why are the people so much bothered about who I am, what my caste is, whether I am good or bad? Why don't they mind their own business? [Tulsidas laments that the people are more concerned about which class of the society a person belongs to, or what is his calling, or his status in the society, or how learned he is, etc. What does it matter, Tulsidas wonders. If a man does not have devotion and love for Lord Sri Ram than his taking birth in a high caste, or being extremely successful in life by acquiring fame and money, or being very learned in the scriptures so much so that he might know them forwards and backwards—all these and such other achievements are null and void Tulsidas says that though he has none of the worldly achievements a man usually yearns for, he still considers himself extremely successful and fulfilled because he has sincere and abiding devotion and love for Lord Ram. For him nothing else matters.]'

कोऊ कहै, करत कुसाज, दगाबाज बड़ो,
 कोऊ कहै रामको गुलामु खरो खूब है।
 साधु जानै महासाधु, खल जानै महाखल,
 बानी झूठी-साँची कोटि उदत हबूब है।।
 चहत न काहूसो न कहत काहूकी कछू,
 सबकी सहत, उर अंतर न ऊब है।
 तुलसीको भलो पोच हाथ रघुनाथही के
 रामकी भगति-भूमि मेरी मति दूब है।।108।।

108—'Some say that this fellow Tulsidas commits cheating, fraud and trickery etc., some say he is very disloyal and treacherous, while some others say that he is a truthful servant of Sri Ram. Saints know that I am a great saint, while miscreants recognise me as the greatest of rascals. There is a flood of numerous types of comments about me and my character—some true, others false. I do not want anything from any body, nor speak anything about anyone. I tolerate all with fortitude and forbearance, and have no ill-will or agitation in my mind against anyone. Tulsidas' welfare or harm is in the hands of his Lord Sri Ram. My wisdom is like grass in the field of devotion for Sri Ram (i.e. the ultimate sustenance of my wisdom and intellect is in having sincere devotion for Lord Ram even as the ground or field is the sustainer of the grass).'

जागैं जोगी-जंगम, जती-जमाती ध्यान धरैं,
 डरैं उर भारी लोभ, मोह, कोह, कामके।
 जागैं राजा राजकाज, सेवक-समाज, साज,
 सोचैं सुनि समाचार बड़े बैरी बामके।।
 जागैं बुध बिद्या हित पंडित चकित चित,
 जागैं लोभी लालच धरनि, धन, धामके।
 जागैं भोगी भोग हीं, बियोगी, रोगी सोगबस,
 सोचैं सुख तुलसी भरोसे एक रामके।।109।।

109—Yogis, Jangams (who have tied their male organs with a shackle), Sanyasis (those who have renounced the world; hermits) and those saints who move in groups—keep awake (alert) because on the one hand they meditate on the Lord God, and on the other hand they are very afraid of (the attacks of) lust, desires, anger, attachments, greed etc.

The Kings keep awake due to a variety of reasons—such as to attend to their royal duties regarding different works of the kingdom, their royal engagements, enjoyment of pleasures, calls for paying attention by the court-councilors, and to look after their vast property and realm. They also keep awake and alert because they are so worried about hearing of any news of big and powerful enemies who could attack them any time if they let their guard down.

Intelligent Pundits keep awake for studying; greedy persons for their land, wealth and homes; indulgent persons for the pleasures of the material world and sense-organs; and diseased persons and those who have been separated from their loved ones keep awake due to the agony of disease and separation.

But Tulsidas sleeps peacefully on the strength of Lord Ram because the Lord would protect him from any misfortunes. Tulsidas has reliance on Sri Ram, and so he has nothing to worry about, and is at complete peace with himself.

रामु मातु, पितु, बंधु, सुजन, गुरु, पूज्य, परमहित ।
साहेबु, सखा, सहाय, नेह-नाते, पुनीत चित ।।
देसु, कोसु, कुलु, कर्म, धर्म, धनु, धामु, धरनि, गति ।
जाति-पाँति सब भाँति लागि रामहि हमारि पति ।।
परमारथु, स्वारथु, सुजसु, सुलभ राम तेँ सकल फल ।
कह तुलसिदासु, अब, जब-कबहुँ एक रामते मोर भल ।।110 ।।

110—'Lord Sri Ram is our parent, friend, kin, Guru (teacher, preceptor), revered and the greatest benefactor. The Lord is our Lord, a true friend and helper. Truly, all the relations of affection that exist are represented solely by Sri Ram. Our country, wealth, property, race/caste/clan, duties, homestead and destiny/fate are also Sri Ram. Our caste-clan and fame is Sri Ram. And all the fruits of good deeds done by us, as well as our salvation, welfare, good fame etc. are easily available to us by the courtesy of Sri Ram.'

Tulsidas says that either now or whenever in future, if any welfare is ever expected, then it can be expected only from Lord Ram, and from no one else.

[Note—It is to be observed here that in this as well as all the proceeding and preceding verses, the common strand is Tulsidas' unadulterated, supreme and determined allegiance, faith and devotion for Sri Ram. For him, everything else is of no significance and consequence].

महाराज, बलि जाउँ, राम! सेवक-सुखदायक ।
महाराज, बलि जाउँ, राम! सुन्दर सब लायक ।
महाराज, बलि जाउँ, राम! सब संकट-मोचन ।
महाराज, बलि जाउँ, राम! राजीवबिलोचन ।।
बलि जाउँ, राम! करुनायतन, प्रनतपाल, पातकहरन ।
बलि जाउँ, राम! कलि-भय-बिकल तुलसिदासु राखिअ सरन ।।111 ।।

111—Oh the Great Lord known as Sri Ram! You give happiness and peace to your devotees and those who serve you—I offer myself at your feet (to you)! [That is, I pray before you with the greatest of reverence.]

Oh the Great Lord Sri Ram! Oh the beauteous and all-able Sri Ram. I pray before you.

Oh the Great Lord Sri Ram! You can provide freedom from all troubles. I submit myself before you.

Oh the Great Lord Sri Ram who has lotus eyes! I revere and adore you.

You are the abode of mercy, protector of those who seek your refuge, and the remover (eliminator) of sins.

Oh Ram, keep Tulsidas under your protection because he is very agitated due to the fear of Kaliyug. I beg before you.

[Note :- 'वलि जाना' is a word having different connotations according to context. Hence different words have been used to express the hidden intent of the lines].

जय ताड़का-सुबाहु-मथन मारीच-मानहर!
 मुनिमख-रच्छन-दच्छ, सिलातारन, करुणाकर!
 नृपगन-बल-मद सहित संभु-कोदंड-बिहंडन!
 जय कुठारधरदर्पदलन दिनकरकुलमंडन।।
 जय जनकनगर-आनंदप्रद, सुखसागर, सुषमाभवन।
 कह तुलसिदासु सुरमुकुटमनि, जय जय जय जानकिरमन।।112।।

112—Glory to you (Sri Ram)! You had destroyed the demons Tadka and Subhau, and had broken (crushed) the arrogance of Marich; you are an expert in protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, you had liberated Ahilya who had been converted into a stone by a curse; you are a mine of mercy and kindness, and had broken the pride of Parashuram that he had conquered all the Kshatriya kings, along with the bow of Lord Shiva (at Janakpur).

Glory to you! You had crushed the pride and arrogance of Parashuram who carries an axe, and who is like an ornament (gem-like) in the Sun-race. Glory to you Sri Ram.

You gave happiness and joy to the city of Janakpur (i.e. to its inhabitants by marrying Sita). You are an ocean of extreme bliss, and an abode of splendour, magnificence and glory! Hail you, Sri Ram! Glory to you!

Tulsidas sings the glories and praises of Sri Ram, who is the crown jewel among Gods, and the most beloved of Sita. Glory to you! Glory to you!! Glory to you!!!

जय जयंत-जयकर, अनंत, सज्जनजनरंजन!
 जय बिराध-बध-बिदुष, बिबुध-मुनिगन-भय-भंजन!
 जय निसिचरी-बिरुप-करन रघुबंसबिभूषण!
 सुभट चतुर्दस-सहस दलन त्रिसिरा-खर-दूषण।।
 जय दंडकवन-पावन-करन, तुलसिदास-संसय-समन!
 जगबिदित, जगतमनि, जयति जय जय जय जानकिरमन!।।113।।

113—Hail and Glory to you (Sri Ram)! You had won Jayant (the son of Indra who had turned himself into a crow to test the ability of Sri Ram). You are endless (eternal, infinite), and a provider of bliss to all the saints.

Glory to you who had expertly killed the demon Viradh. Glory to you who are an eliminator of the fear of the Gods and the sages.

Hail and Glory to you! You had deformed the demoness Supernakha (by chopping off the nose and ears of), and you are the (ornamental) jewel of king Raghu's dynasty. You had destroyed the demons Khar and Dushan along with (their army of) fourteen thousand warriors.

Glory to you, who purified the Dandak forest and destroyed the doubts and confusions of Tulsidas. The renowned illuminator of the world—glory to you Sri Ram, the beloved of Sita! Hail, Hail, Hail!

जय मायामृगमथन, गीध-सबरी-उद्धारन!
जय कबंधसूदन बिसाल तरु ताल बिदारन!
दवन बालि बलसालि, थपन सुग्रीव, संतहित!
कपि कराल भट भालु कटक पालन, कृपालचित!
जय सिय-बियोग-दुख हेतु कृत-सेतुबंध बारिधिदमन!
दससीस बिभीषन अभयप्रद, जय जय जय जानकिरमन! ॥114॥

114- Hail and Glory to you (Sri Ram)! You had killed Marich in the form of an illusive decoy golden deer, and you had liberated Jatau (the vulture) and Sabari (the low caste tribal woman).

Glory to you who killed Kabandh (the demon with a head-less trunk), and who pierced the tall coconut trees (by a single arrow). You had destroyed (killed) the strong Bali (the monkey), gave Sugriv the crown of Kiskindha, and are the benefactor of saints.

Glory to you! You are the merciful who protected and sustained the army of ferocious monkeys and brave bears. You had constructed a bridge after conquering the ocean so as to alleviate the sorrows of Sita, originating from her separation from you (Sri Ram).

Hail and Glory to you! Oh Sri Ram, the beloved of Sita. You had removed the fear of Ravana from the heart of Vibhishan. Glory to you! Glory to you!! Glory to you!!!

कनककुधरु केदारु, बीजु सुंदर सुरमनि बर।
सींचि कामधुकधेनु सुधामय पय बिसुद्धतर॥
तीरथपति अंकुरसरूप जच्छेस रच्छ तेहि।
मरकतमय साखा-सुपत्र, मंजरिय लच्छि जेहि॥
कैवल्य सकल फल, कल्पतरु, सुभ सुभाव सब सुख बरिस।
कह तुलसिदास, रघुबंसमनि, तौ कि होइ तुअ कर सरिस॥115॥

115—If Mt. Sumeru becomes a large vessel (a platter, a large dish or a crucible), the beautiful gem called Chintamani becomes the seed which is then watered by the purest milk of the Kamdhenu cow, and from it the king of all holy cities (i.e. Prayag, Allahabad) emerges like a bud (or germinates into a new plant) which is protected by God Kuber (the patron God of wealth) himself, and this sapling becomes a tree which has branches and leaves made of gems called Markat-Mani, its flowers are Goddess Laxmi personified herself, and its fruits are liberations from all types of bondages—even if such a rare and magnificent Kalpa Tree naturally rains (showers, bestows, gives, grants) all types of welfare and happiness, Tulsidas wonders that still (inspite of it), oh Sri Ram who is like a gem of Raghu's clan ('Raghu-bansa-mani'), can that Kalpa Tree ever compare itself to the glories and mystical powers that reside in your divine hands and rain or shower from them? (No they can't!).

[Tulsidas means that even the best of gifts and the best of giver of such gifts cannot match the graciousness, the benevolence, the magnanimity and the kind-heartedness of Lord Sri Ram. The Kalpa Tree is famed as the one which can give anything asked from it, but Tulsidas says that it is no comparison to Lord Ram's power to grant boons and give largesse. The fruits of this mythical Tree are no comparison with the amount and quality of gifts the Lord gives.]

जाय सो सुभट्ट समर्थ पाइ रन रारि न भडै ।
जाय सो जती कहाय बिषय-बासना न छडै ।।
जाय धनिकु बिनु दान, जाय निर्धन बिनु धर्महि ।
जाय सो पंडित पढ़ि पुरान जो रत न सुकर्महि ।।
सुत जाय मातु-पितु-भक्ति बिनु, तिय सो जाय जेहि पति न हित ।
सब जाय दासु तुलसी कहै, जौ न रामपद नेहु नित ।।116।।

116—That able and brave warrior is useless who does not enter into combat even when the circumstances are favourable. A hermit or an ascetic who, having renounced the world, does not abandon greed and desire for indulgences in pleasures of the sense organs, is also useless (as a hermit or ascetic). A rich man who does not make charity and gives alms, and a poor who does not stick to the righteous and correct path are also worthless. A Pundit who does not follow the righteous path and does not do sanctioned deeds even after studying the Purans is equally worthless and in vain. A son who does not respect his parents, and a wife who is not loyal and devoted towards her husband are similarly of no value.

Tulsidas says that, likewise, if one does not have love, affection, devotion, reverence and faith in the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram, then all else are useless, fruitless, futile and in vain for him.

को न क्रोध निरदह्यो, काम बस केहि नहि कीन्हो ?
को न लोभ दृढ़ फंद बाँधि त्रासन करि दीन्हो ?
कौन हृदय नहि लाग कठिन अति नारि-नयन-सर ?
लोचनजुत नहि अंध भयो श्रीपाइ कौन नर ?
सुर-नाग-लोक महिमंडलहुँ को जु मोह कीन्हो जय न ?
कह तुलसिदासु सो ऊबरै, जेहि राख रामु राजिवनयन ।।117।।

117—Who has not been burnt and tormented by anger? Who has not been conquered and overcome by lust, passions and desires? Whom has greed not ensnared and subject to torments? Whose heart has not been pierced by irresistible and enticing lustful glances of a woman? Which man has not become blind (inspite of having a pair of eyes) on having riches (i.e. who has not become haughty, arrogant, selfish, greedy, miserly etc. when he acquires wealth and prosperity)? In the three worlds—the heaven, the terrestrial and the subterranean—is there anyone who has not been won-over (conquered, overpowered, ensnared and bogged down) by attachments?

Tulsidas says that only those who are protected by the lotus-eyed Sri Ram can ever hope to escape from the above vices and snares.

भौंह-कमान सँधान सुठान जे नारि-बिलोकनि-बानतें बाँचे ।
कोप-कृसानु गुमान-अवाँ घट-ज्यो जिनके मन आव न आँचे ।।
लोभ सबै नटके बस है कपि-ज्यो जगमें बहु नाच न नाचे ।
नीके हैं साधु सबै तुलसी, पै तेई रघुबीरके सेवकसाँचे ।।118।।

118—Those who have escaped the arrows in the form of lascivious glances shot from the curved eyebrows of a beautiful woman, those whose mind had not been hard-baked like a mud pitcher in the oven of arrogance and pride by the fire of anger, and those who do not dance like a monkey to the tune of a monkey-charmer in the shape of greed and desires—Tulsidas says that only they are the true devotees and servants of Lord Sri Ram. Notwithstanding this, however, all saints are generally good and worthy.

बेष सुबनाइ सुचि बचन कहैं चुवाइ
जाइ तौ न जरनि धरनि-धन-धामकी ।
कोटिक उपाय करि लालि पालिअत देह,
मुख कहिअत गति रामहीके नामकी ।।
प्रगटैं उपासना, दुरावैं दुरबासनाहि,
मानस निवासभूमि लोभ-मोह-कामकी ।
राग - रोष - इरिषा - कपट - कुटिलाई भरे
तुलसी-से भगत भगति चहैं रामकी ।।119।।

119—Those people who are dressed like a saint (i.e. their external appearance resembles a holy person) and speak words that are deceptively sweet and pure like nectar, but desire, greed and attachment towards land, wealth and homestead have not left their hearts, those who adopt myriad of ways to take care of their bodies but say (falsely though) that they depend only on Sri Ram's name, those who make a show of their devotion and worship of God but hide their evil desires and inclinations within, and those whose mind has become an abode of greed, attachments, passions, lust and desires—Tulsidas wonders and expresses incredulity that even such people, who are full of attachments, anger, jealousy, deceit/fraud/falsehood and treachery, want to have devotion for Sri Ram. [That is, it is impossible for such people having these evils in their hearts to have love and devotion for Sri Ram. It means that these evils have to be removed from the heart before Sri Ram can be attained].

कालिहीं तरुन तन, कालिहीं धरनि-धन,
कालिहीं जितौंगो रन, कहत कुचालि है ।
कालिहीं साधौंगो काज, कालिहीं राजा-समाज,
मसक ह्वै कहै, 'भार मेरे मेरु हालिहै' ।।
तुलसी यही कुभाँति घने घर घालि आई,
घने घर घालति है, घने घर घालिहै ।
देखत-सुनत-समुझतहू न सूझै सोई,
कबहूँ कह्यो न कालहू को कालु कालि है ।।120।।

120—Fraudulent and cunning people boast—'I shall get a youthful body tomorrow (i.e. very soon), I shall receive land and wealth very soon, tomorrow I shall be victorious in battle, all my jobs will be done tomorrow, and I will be surrounded by a royal company and acquire regal surroundings and its attendant pomp and show tomorrow itself.'

In spite of being minuscule and non-entity like a mosquito, they boast that the huge Mt. Sumeru shall tremble due to their weight. Tulsidas observes that because of this bad habit of boasting, many a homes have been ruined in the past, are being ruined now,

and shall be ruined in the future as well. This is because no one realises the futility of such loud-mouthed and boastful talk as Kaal (death) is also standing with wide-open mouth to devour all such people tomorrow. [People boast of so many things not realising the futility of it all. They don't realise the basic thing that life is but a bubble—it can burst any time. What to talk of tomorrow, it can burst the very next moment. So one should not boast in vain about tomorrow, and instead live life fruitfully in the present.]

भयो न तिकाल तिहूँ लोक तुलसी-सो मंद,
निदैं सब साधु, सुनि मानौ न सकोचु हौं ।
जानत न जोगु हियँ हानि मानैं जानकीसु,
काहेको परेखो, पापी प्रपंची पोचु हौं ।।
पेट भरिबेके काज महाराजको कहायों
महाराजहूँ कह्यो है प्रनत-बिमोचु हौं ।
निज अघजाल, कलिकालकी करालता
बिलोकि होत ब्याकुल, करत सोई सोचु हौं ।।121।।

121—'Past, present and future—there has been no wretched person like Tulsidas in the three periods of time and in all the three Lokas (the 3 worlds). All the saints criticize him, but inspite of hearing everything, I do not mind. Even Sri Ram does not seem to consider him (Tulsidas) worthy; this is why he hesitates in his mind in accepting me (as his own). Why should I complain at this because actually I am a great sinner, deceitful, mean and lowly. I had identified myself with Lord Sri Ram for my own self interest (good) because the Lord has asserted that he gives salvation to all who seek his refuge.' But (inspite of the Lord's assertions) Tulsidas is very agitated seeing the wealth of sins that he has accumulated, as well as the wickedness and cunningness of Kaliyug, and he worries about the prospects of his emancipation and salvation.

धर्म कैं सेतु जगमंगलके हेतु भूमि-
भारु हरिबेको अवतारु लियो नरको ।
नीति औ प्रतीति-प्रीतिपाल चालि प्रभु मानु
लोक-बेद राखिबेको पनु रघुबरको ।।
बानर-बिभीषनकी ओर के कनावड़े हैं ।,
सो प्रसंगु सुनैं अंगु जरै अनुचरको ।
राखे रीति आपनी जो होइ सोई कीजै, बलि,
तुलसी तिहारो घर जायऊ है घरको ।।122।।

122—The Lord God, who is like a bridge of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and purity), had manifested himself in a human form for the welfare of the world as well as to remove the burden of unrighteousness and sins from the shoulder of the earth. It is the habit and natural inclination of the Lord to follow laws, regulations, affectionate relationships and righteous behaviour and conduct (to set and example for others). It is Lord Sri Ram's vow and a firm determination that he will keep the sanctity of the Vedas and other scriptures, as well as the established norms of behaviour and conduct in the world.

Hearing that the Lord even felt indebted to Sugriv and Vibhishan, this poor servant (Tulsidas) burns in jealousy (wondering why the Lord has not shown similar kindness and mercy on him).

[Lord Ram felt obliged to Sugriv for helping him find and recover Sita by putting the entire army of monkeys at the Lord's disposal, and in return the Lord made him the king of Kishkindha. Similarly, the Lord felt obliged to Vibhishan for seeking the Lord's shelter and helping him in the war with Ravana, who happened to be Vibhishan's own brother, so much so that the Lord made him the king of Lanka after the war was won. So Tulsidas says that the Lord must show the same degree of benevolence and grace upon him also because he too has surrendered himself before the Lord and goes about singing and praising the Lord's glory on this earth.

Actually and frankly speaking, this is indeed true. It is irrefutably due to Tulsidas that Lord Ram's name became so popular and so much loved and revered in every household of India. Tulsidas wrote in the local dialect so that the Lord's divine story could be accessed even by a layman, and he injected the nectar of devotion and love for the Lord in his writings that were missing earlier in all the other classical renderings of the story in the Vedas and the Purans and even in other versions of the Ramayana by other authors.]

Hence, 'I beg before you, you should keep in mind your reputation and character, and do for me whatever you can do or deem fit to do. This Tulsidas is your humble servant for all generations, from many previous births—so you must have special favour for him.'

नाम महाराजके निबाह नीको कीजै उर
 सबही सोहात, मैं न लोगनि सोहात हौं ।
 कीजै राम! बार यहि मेरी ओर चष-कोर
 ताहि लगि रंक ज्यों सनेह को ललात हौं ।।
 तुलसी बिलोकि कलिकालकी करालता
 कृपालको सुभाउ समुझत सकुचात हौं ।
 लोक एक भाँतिको, त्रिलोकनाथ लोकबस
 आपनो न सोचु, स्वामी-सोचहीं सुखात हौं ।।123 ।।

123—"Those who chant the Lord's holy Name sincerely from their heart are respected and loved by the people, but the irony is that I (Tulsidas) am not liked by them. [It is a historical fact that the Brahmins and Pundits of Tulsidas' time were extremely jealous of him and hounded him out of envy. They left no stone unturned to defame him and ridicule him. Tulsidas' writings were stolen and even thrown in the river. In spite of such sensor by evil-minded and pervert people, Tulsidas persevered with his firm conviction and faith in the strength of the Lord, and his purest form of love and devotion for the Lord. The result was that while Tulsidas became immortal, his tormentors were lost in the sand of time.]

So oh Ram! At this moment of testing times, look at me with kindness. I am eager for your kind and merciful glance like an utterly poor man looks greedily at sweet food, and am eager for your grace, empathy and sympathy.' Tulsidas says further, 'Having considered both the ferocity and cruelty of Kaliyug's nature vis-à-vis the nature of the merciful and kind Lord (Sri Ram), I hesitate. In this age, the whole world appears to be

the same—all (good or bad men) are criticizing me, and though you are the Lord of Triloki (the three worlds), you still have to be mindful of public opinion. But I am not worried about myself; I am more worried about you and your reputation.'

[Tulsidas means that though Sri Ram is ever so kind, merciful and benevolent, he is reluctant to extend this benefit to Tulsidas because the public opinion is against the latter, and the Lord has to keep the public in good humour because he is the King of the world and must take into consideration the opinion of his subjects. But, in doing so, the reputation of the Lord as being kind, merciful and benevolent is also suffering at the same time. Tulsidas is so clever—he indirectly and sarcastically admonishes his Lord for being late in taking care of Tulsidas; he provokes him and challenges him to take care of his servant Tulsidas inspite of the world criticizing him and plotting for his downfall!]

तौलौ लोभ लोलुप ललात लालची लबार,
 बार-बार लालचु धरनि-धन-धामको ।
 तबलौ बियोग-रोग-सोग, भोग जातनाको
 जुग सम लागत जीवनु जाम-जामको ।
 तौलौ दुख-दारिद दहत अति नित तनु
 तुलसी है किंकरु बिमोह-कोह-कामको ।
 सब दुख आपने, निरापने सकल सुख,
 जौलौ जनु भयो न बजाइ राजा रामको ।।124।।

124—Till the time Tulsidas becomes an open and declared servant (devotee) of Lord Sri Ram, he shall remain eager for bits and morsels of food; he shall be greedy, pervert and talkative; he shall repeatedly covet and be tempted by land, wealth and home etc.; he shall have the sorrows of separation and be suffering from various diseases; he shall be forced to undergo all types of torments and agonies; every moment would appear like a burden for him (i.e. his life would remain a burden for him); his body would burn (suffer) due to all sorts of agonies and poverty; and he shall remain a slave of passions, lust and desire, as well as of numerous attachments and anger.

Tulsidas says that till the time he does not become a devout devotee and servant of Lord Sri Ram, all the troubles and agonies that exist in this world would fall in his (Tulsidas') share, while all the happiness and comforts would belong to others.

[In essence Tulsidas says that all his misfortunes shall vanish as soon as he becomes a 'real' devotee of Sri Ram. Now, this again shows how humble he is. It is well known that he was the most ardent and loyal devotee of Sri Ram. So there is no question of his devotion being of a secondary quality or of falling in the second category. Secondly, he is also advising us indirectly by citing himself that we must abandon or leave all other means of seeking happiness and peace in this world, and instead concentrate on the only and the easiest way to achieve it—and that is to have complete and total devotion towards Lord Sri Ram.]

तौलौ मलीन, हीन, दीन, सुख सपने न,
 जहाँ-तहाँ दुखी जनु भाजनु कलेसको ।
 तौलौ उबेने पाय फिरत पेटै खलाय
 बाय मुह सहत पराभौ देस-देसको ।
 तबलौ दयावनी दुसह दुख दारिदको,

साथरीको सोइबो, ओढ़िबो झूने खेसको ।।
जबलौ न भजै जीहँ जानकी-जीवन रामु,
राजनको राजा सो तौ साहेबु महेसको ।। 125 ।।

125—Till the time a living being does not worship the holy and the divine Name of Sri Ram—who is the Emperor of kings and the Lord of Shiva—by way of remembering and chanting the Name with his tongue, he remains wretched, suffers from all sorts of wants, remains in darkness (i.e. remains ignorant), and distressed. He does not find happiness even in his dreams. Such a person is susceptible to agonies and torments.

Further, it is only till then that he has to wander everywhere barefoot, with outstretched hands and an empty stomach (hungry and begging for morsels of food), and in the process suffer from grave insults, humiliation and reproach. He also remains afraid of abject poverty, and undergoes extreme troubles and sufferings—like sleeping on earth or on grass with straw as bed, and wear torn and tattered rugs.”

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Section-2/Part-5

Geetawali

{In this part, we shall read some selected verses of Geetawali and see how Tulsidas has cited the example of Vibhishan, the younger brother of the demon king Ravana of Lanka, to plead his own case with Lord Ram, and the Lord’s solemn declaration.}

Sundar Kand, verse no. 40—

कहो, क्यों न बिभीषनकी बनै ?
गयो छाड़ि छल सरन रामकी, जो फल चारि चार्यों जनै ।। 1 ।।
मंगलमूल प्रनाम जासु जग, मूल अमंगलके खनै ।
तेहि रघुनाथ हाथ माथे दियो, को ताकी महिमा भनै ? ।। 2 ।।
नाम—प्रताप पतितपावन किए, जे न अघाने अघ अनै ।
कोउ उलटो, कोउ सूधो जपि भए राजहंस बायस—तनै ।। 3 ।।
हुतो ललात कृसगात खात खरि, मोद पाइ कोदो—कनै ।
सो तुलसी चातक भयो जाचत राम स्यामसुंदर घनै ।। 4 ।।

5/40—Say, why should Vibhishan not be rewarded (or be treated as being most fortunate and lucky)? For, after forsaking all trickery, deception, pretension, cheating and stratagem, he had come to seek refuge with and shelter of Lord Sri Ram who gives all the four types of celebrated fruits to all the four types of devotees¹ (1).

Doing 'Pranam' (i.e. paying obeisance by bowing the head) to Lord Sri Ram is the root of all auspiciousness and well-beings, and is potent enough to uproot all inauspiciousness and evil forebodings in this world—the same Raghunath (Sri Ram) had placed his benevolent and merciful hands on the head of Vibhishan. Say, how can one describe his (Vibhishan's) fame and good luck? (2).

The power and might of the Lord's holy Name has purified even those sinners and vile ones who were never tired of doing evil, sinning and committing misdemeanours and unrighteousness of all kinds. Some had chanted his name in the correct order, and others in the reverse order (i.e. some as RAM and some as MARA), and by doing so, even those whose characters and deeds were like crows became as exalted as royal swans (3).

[Talking about himself, Tulsidas says—] 'He, who was of a weak body (i.e. under-nourished, emaciated) and had to eat husk (i.e. eat worthless, left-over food), who yearned for bits and morsels of food, and had to content with ordinary food and felt happy even to get it (in short, who was extremely impoverished)—now is so privileged that he is able to directly ask or seek like a Papiha (a sparrow hawk) from the beautiful dark cloud representing Sri Ram.

[Tulsidas has decided not to seek from anybody other than his Lord Ram who is compared here to the dark rain-bearing clouds. The cloud is symbolic of magnanimity, generosity and charity as well as is used as a metaphor for life and its abundant pleasures and joys. The cloud showers rain which sustains life on this earth so much so that when it rains and the dark cloud is cited in the sky, the farmer rejoices and the animals begin to sing in the garden and the forests. The Papiha asks for rain to satisfy its own thirst, but the gracious and kind cloud gives rain not only to him, but at his behest or on his excuse, to the whole world. Similarly, Tulsidas asks from Lord Sri Ram for his own benefit, but the magnanimous Lord showers his grace and munificence on the whole creation. Tulsidas rejoices at the Lord's grace and benevolence.] (4).

[Note—¹The 4 types of fruits are—Artha=wealth, prosperity; Dharma=righteousness, probity, propriety, virtues; Kaam=fulfilled desires; and Moksha=emancipation, salvation and deliverance from the shackles of this mundane, delusionary world.

The 4 types of devotees are as follows— (a) Aarta = one who worships the Lord to get rid of their sorrows, miseries, agonies, troubles and tribulations; (b) Artharthi = those who worship the Lord for material gain, wealth, prosperity etc.; (c) Jigyasu = those who worship the Lord in order to seek Him, or find out about His true nature, the Supreme Truth, the essence of existence etc.; and (d) Gyani= those who have realised Him, and worship Him selflessly. They are also aware of the true nature of the soul.]

Sundar Kand, verse no. 42—

गये राम सरन सबकौ भलो ।
गनी-गरीब, बड़ो-छोटो, बुध-मूढ़, हीनबल-अतिबलो ॥ 1 ॥
पंगु-अंध, निरगुनी-निसंबल, जो न लहै जाचे जलो ।
सो निबह्यो नीके, जो जनमि जग राम-राजमारग चलो ॥ 2 ॥

नाम—प्रताप—दिवाकर कर खर गरत तुहिन ज्यों कलिमलो।
 सुतहित नाम लेत भवनिधि तरि गयो अजामिल—सो खलो॥ 3॥
 प्रभुपद प्रेम प्रनाम—कामतरु सद्य बिभीषनको फलो।
 तुलसी सुमिरत नाम सबनिको मंगलमय नभ—जल थलो॥ 4॥

5/42—Everyone stands to gain and have welfare by seeking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram—whether he is rich or impoverished, whether he is of high or low birth, of whatever stature and position in society he is, whether he is wise or an idiot, and whether he is weak or most strong and valiant (1).

Even those who are lame, blind, without any virtues and qualities, and most impoverished and wretched, who do not even get water to drink when desired—if they took birth in this world and followed the highway of Lord Ram (i.e. the path of devotion, worship, adoration, love, affection, surrender, submission and service etc.), they were well looked after and sustained by the Lord (2).

In the face of the brilliant and splendorous rays of the sun representing the might, glory, fame and virtues of Sri Ram's holy Name, the faults (i.e. evils, vices, misdemeanours, sins etc.) of Kaliyug melt away like snow. Even the wicked rascal such as Ajaamil crossed the ocean of this illusionary and mundane world, and attained emancipation and salvation just by calling out his name (Narain), even though he had meant to call out to his son of the same name. [Ajaamil was so horrified at seeing the messengers of death that he called for his own son, named Narain, to protect him. But since the word also was the name of Vishnu, the latter immediately sent his own messengers to rescue the wretched Ajaamil and bring him to heaven.] (3).

The bowing of his head by Vibhishan (to pay obeisance to Lord Ram) proved to be a Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree) for him, and it bore fruits for him immediately too. [Vibhishan was subjected to great humiliation in Lanka by his own brother Ravana who treated him with great contempt because Vibhishan was a stout follower of Lord Vishnu. But when Vibhishan came and took the shelter of Lord Ram, he was not only warmly welcomed but also given respect and a position in the hierarchy of Lord's ministers.]

Tulsidas cites this as an example to say that similarly, when one recalls or remembers the Lord's holy Name, the sky, the earth (land) and the water (rivers, oceans etc.) all become auspicious and full of good omens for him (4)."

Sundar Kand, verse no. 44—

दीन—हित बिरद पुराननि गायो।
 आरत—बंधु, कृपालु, मृदुल—चित जानि सरन हौं आयो॥ 1॥
 तुम्हरे रिपुको अनुज बिभीषन, बंस निसाचर जायो।
 सुनि गुन—सील—सुभाउ नाथको मैं चरननि चितु लायो॥ 2॥
 जानत प्रभु दुख—सुख दासनिको, तातें कहि न सुनायो।
 करि करुना भरि नयन बिलोकहु, तब जानौं अपनायो॥ 3॥
 बचन बिनीत सुनत रघुनायक हँसि करि निकट बुलायो।
 भेंट्यो हरि भरि अंक भरत—ज्यों, लंकापति मन भायो॥ 4॥

करपंकज सिर परसि अभय कियो, जनपर हेतु दिखायो।
तुलसिदास रघुबीर भजन करि को न परमपद पायो ? ॥ 5 ॥

5/44—[Vibhishan pleads with Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord! The Purans have sung your glories (i.e. made you renowned) as being one who is the well-wisher and benefactor of the meek, weak, lowly, humble, wretched and downtrodden. I too have come to seek your refuge and shelter, recognising you as a friend of the lowly, the humble and the distressed, as being merciful, compassionate and gracious, and of being a sweet, amiable and friendly temperament (1).

I am born in the demon clan and am a younger brother of your arch enemy Ravana. Hearing your virtues, noble characters and temperament, I have concentrated my mind in your holy feet (2).

The Lord is aware of the joys and sorrows of those who serve him faithfully, with devotion and sincerity (ardent devotees, followers, subordinates), that is why I did not mention them. Now, only when you intently look at me with merciful, loving and compassionate eyes will I know that you have accepted me (in your refuge as a devotee) (3).’

Hearing such earnest pleadings of Vibhishan, Raghunayak (i.e. the Lord of king Raghu’s race; Lord Sri Ram) laughed (i.e. smiled) and called him near, embraced him and held him close to his bosom as if he were his own brother Bharat, and regarded him as a king of Lanka for all practical purposes (4).

Then, touching his (Vibhishan's) head with his lotus-like hands (i.e. palms), he made him fearless—this is how the Lord exhibited his affection for his devotee (and faithful, loyal follower). Tulsidas observes that indeed, who has not attained the most exalted and the supreme state (or status) of existence by worshipping and having devotion for Sri Ram? (5).”

[Note—The Supreme post or stature for Vibhishan here has different connotations—in the material world it is the kingship of Lanka and freedom from Ravana's fear. In the spiritual realm it is to be blessed by the divine sight and blessing of the Lord, be recognised as his devotee, and attain the chance to serve his holy feet. And in the highest realm of metaphysics it is the oneness with the Supreme Soul. Frankly speaking, without any prejudice and interpolating with the context, this third state was attained by Ravana and Kumbhakarn but *not* by Vibhishan. During the final battle, a bright shaft of effulgence representing the life-force or soul had emerged from their bodies and had merged with Sri Ram (Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand no. 103/9 and 71/8 respectively), but this privilege was denied to Vibhishan though it is true that a devotee prefers to eternally serve the holy feet of the Lord, but the ultimate peace and bliss is attained only when the microcosmic soul merges with the macrocosmic ocean of bliss—this stature both Ravana and Kumbhakarn achieved, but Vibhishan missed!]

Lord Ram's Proclamation: Sundar Kand, verse no. 45: Raag Dhanasree—

सत्य कहौं मेरो सहज सुभाउ ।
 सुनहु सखा कपिपति लंकापति, तुम्ह सन कौन दुराउ ॥ 1 ॥
 सब बिधि हीन—दीन, अति जड़मति जाको कतहुँ न ठाउँ ।
 आयो सरन भजौं, न तजौं तिहि, यह जानत रिषिराउ ॥ 2 ॥
 जिन्हके हौं हित सब प्रकार चित, नाहिन और उपाउ ।
 तिन्हहिं लागि धरि देह करौं सब, डरौं न सुजस नसाउ ॥ 3 ॥
 पुनि पुनि भुजा उठाइ कहत हौं, सकल सभा पतिआउ ।
 नहि कोऊ प्रिय मोहि दास सम, कपट—प्रीति बहि जाउ ॥ 4 ॥
 सुनि रघुपति बचन बिभीषन प्रेम—मगन, मन चाउ ।
 तुलसिदास तजि आस—त्रास सब ऐसे प्रभु कहँ गाउ ॥ 5 ॥

5/45—[Sri Ram proclaimed—] ‘I speak truthfully about my inherent and natural temperament. Listen, the king of monkeys (Sugriv) and the king of Lanka (Vibhishan). There is nothing which I have to conceal from you (1).

He—who is lowly, down trodden, meek, humble, most foolish and highly dud, and who has no destination, succour and solace anywhere in this world—if such a person comes to me seeking shelter and refuge, I ‘serve’ him in all possible ways and never abandon, avoid or forsake him. This fact is well known to (and endorsed by) Valmiki and other exalted sages and seers (2).

Those whose mind and intellect regard me as the sole benefactor and their well-wisher, and who find no solution (or way out) of their problems (i.e. are in a log-jam)—I assume a human form for them and finish off all their works for them, not bothering (or fearing) that by doing any such act my reputation and fame will be harmed or tainted in any way. [I am not tardy and reluctant at helping my devotees, even as the cost of tarnishing my immaculate image or reputation. Sri Ram seems to justify his acceptance of Vibhishan] (3).

I repeatedly lift my arms and declare, let the whole assembly listen carefully to and believe my words—no one is dearer to me than my servant (ardent devotee, humble follower, refuge seeker). But yes, that servant should be of pure intellect, pure mind and heart, uncorrupt, truthful, honest, free from deceit and of pure disposition in all possible ways (i.e. there should be no motivated vested self-interest, deception, pretensions, conceit, deceit, or cunning in them) (4).’

Hearing these words of Raghupati (Sri Ram), Vibhishan was overwhelmed with waves of surging affections and emotions of endearment for the gracious Lord, while his heart and mind were greatly encouraged and enthused by the Lord’s solemn oath. Tulsidas advises that one should avoid or abandon all hopes and fears, and sing the glories, virtues and fames of such a (munificent, benevolent, merciful, compassionate, gracious, benign, magnanimous and kind) Lord! (5).”

Sundar Kand, verse no. 46—

नाहिन भजिबे जोग बियो ।
 श्रीरघुबीर समान आन को पूरन—कृपा—हियो ॥ 1 ॥
 कहहु, कौन सुर सिला तारि पुनि केवट मीत कियो ?

कौने गीध अधमको पितु—ज्यों निज कर पिंड दियो ? ॥ 2 ॥
 कौन देव सबरीके फल करि भोजन सलिल पियो ?
 बालित्रास—बारिधि बूझत कपि केहि गहि बाँह लियो ? ॥ 3 ॥
 भजन—प्रभाउ बिभीषन भाष्यौ, सुनि कपि—कटक जियो।
 तुलसिदासको प्रभु कोसलपति सब प्रकार बरियो ॥ 4 ॥

5/46—[When Vibhishan heard the Lord make the above promise, he praised the Lord in the following way—] ‘There is no one else more worthy to be worshipped, adored and have devotion for than Lord Sri Ram. Indeed, whose heart is as full with mercy, grace, munificence and kindness as that of Sri Ram? (1).

Say, which other God has liberated the rock (Ahilya from her curse of being turned into a stone) and made Kewat (the boatman) his friend? And who has offered ‘Pinda’ (a round ball-shaped offering given to dead ancestors, especially parents, as a part of funeral rites) to the most sinful and lowly vulture (Jatau) with his own hands? (2).

Which God has eaten the fruits offered by Sabari and drank water at her place (because she was of a low caste and castracised by society)? And who has taken out Sugriv by grasping his arms and prevented him from drowning in the ocean of grief and fear caused by (his elder brother and arch rival) Bali? (3).’

When Vibhishan praised the Lord as aforesaid, highlighting the potential powers of devotion and worship of the Lord (by citing the above examples), the whole army of monkeys¹ heard these words in rapt attention, and discussed it amongst themselves most cheerfully and animatedly. Really, the Lord of Tulsidas, the king of Kaushal (Ayodhya), Lord Sri Ram is indeed the ‘best’ (the most exalted, supreme and one of his kind) in all possible ways (4).”

[Note—¹The fact that the words of Vibhishan made the monkey army became alert, vigilant, animated, cheerful or joyous is significant. Prior to this sermon by Vibhishan, the monkeys had their doubts. But now they were convinced that their Lord was no ordinary prince, and his magical powers will ensure their victory in the up-coming war. They thought that if the enemy’s brother is praising the Lord then surely there must be truth in it. This overcame their dilemmas and uncertainties, and infused them with vigour, enthusiasm and zeal which are essential to win a war. It was a dose of morale booster for the army.]

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Section-2/Part-6

Vinai Patrika

(43)

जयति

सच्चिदव्यापकानंद परब्रह्म-पद, विग्रह-व्यक्त लीलावतारी ।
विकल ब्रह्मादि सुर, सिद्ध संकोचवश, विमल गुण-गेह नर-देह-धारी ॥1॥

जयति

कोशलाधीश कल्याण कोशलसुता, कुशल कैवल्य-फल चारु चारी ।
वेद-बोधित करम-धरम-धरनी-धेनु, विप्र-सेवक साधु-मोदकारी ॥2॥
जयति ऋषि-मखपाल, शमन सज्जन-साल, शापवश मुनिवधू-पापहारी ।
भंजि भवचाप, दलि दाप भूपावली, सहित भृगुनाथ नतमाथ भारी ॥3॥
जयति धारमिक-धुर, धीर रघुवीर गुर-मातु-पितु-बंधु-वचनानुसारी ।
चित्रकूटाद्रि विन्ध्याद्रि दंडकविपिन, धन्यकृत पुन्यकानन-विहारी ॥4॥
जयति पाकारिसुत-काक-करतूति-फलदानि खानि गर्त गोपित विराधा ।
दिव्य देवी वेष देखि लखि निशिचरी जनु विडंबित करी विश्वबाधा ॥5॥
जयति खर-त्रिशिर-दूषण चतुर्दश-सहस-सुभट-मारीच-संहारकर्ता ।
गृध्र-शबरी-भक्ति-विवश करुणासिंधु, चरित निरुपाधि, त्रिविधार्तिहर्ता ॥6॥
जयति मद-अंध कुकबंध बधि, बालि बलशालि बधि, करन सुग्रीव राजा ।
सुभट मर्कट-भालु-कटक-संघट सजत, नमत पद रावणानुज निवाजा ॥7॥
जयति पाथोधि-कृत-सेतु कौतुक हेतु, काल-मन-अगम लई ललकि लंका ।
सकुल, सानुज, सदल दलित दशकंठ रण, लोक-लोकप किये रहित-शंका ॥8॥
जयति सौमित्रि-सीता-सचिव-सहित चले पुष्पकारुढ निज राजधानी ।
दासतुलसी मुदित अवधवासी सकल, राम भे भूप वैदेहि रानी ॥9॥

Verse no. 43— Glory to Lord Ram! You are the supreme transcendental Brahm who is Truth and pure Consciousness personified, is omnipresent and all-pervading, and is an embodiment of eternal happiness and bliss. [That is, you are the Supreme Being personified.] You are invisible, formless and without attributes, but to give effect to your maverism you have assumed a form that is visible and has attributes. When the creator Brahma as well as other Gods and acclaimed sages and seers were overwhelmed by the horrors of uncountable torments and miseries that were inflicted upon them by the cruel demons, then to give them relief from the horrible distress they were being subjected to and alleviate their sufferings you had taken the form of a human (i.e. incarnated yourself on this earth in the visible form of Ram) because you could not deny them your help. (1).

Glory to you! You took birth in the household of the righteous king Dashrath of the Kaushal dynasty and his auspicious consort queen Kaushalaya as four brothers who represented the four divine fruits that can bestow to the creature the rewards of Moksha (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). [The four brothers were Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan.] You gave joys and exhilaration to Vedic ritualistic practices, Dharma (the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, scrupulousness, noble conduct, probity and propriety) mother earth, (holy) cow,

Brahmins (upper-castes, or essentially meaning the wise teacher-class), devotees and Sadhus (the pure-hearted ones). [That is, you made them fearless; you reinstated their honour and self-respect, and sustained them.] (2).

Glory to you! You had protected sage Vishwamitra's Yagya (a vedic ritual in which fire-sacrifice was done) after killing the demons (who were interfering with it, obstructing it and defiling it). You had suppressed the evil ones who endlessly tormented those who were noble and holy. You had liberated Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, from the curse arising out of a sin that resulted in her being turned into a stone. You had vanquished and crushed the ego, haughtiness, vanity and false-pride of all the princes (who had come to marry Sita in a ceremony called 'Swayambar' at Janakpur) by breaking the stern and strong bow that symbolized this formidable world, and had thus put to shame not only these princes but also vanquished the sense of false pride, haughtiness and arrogance about his own strength and valour that sage Parashuram had, so much so that the latter lowered his head in surrender and humility. [This incident refers to the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita as narrated in detail in the epic Ramayana.] (3).

Glory to you! You are steady and determined while bearing the burden (responsibility) of upholding the virtues of Dharma (auspiciousness, righteousness, scrupulousness, probity and propriety). You are an extraordinarily courageous warrior of king Raghu's clan. Giving due respect to (i.e. obeying) the words (or wishes) of your father, mother, Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) and brother (Bharat), you had obliged them by coming to the forest, and in the process you had made the three great forests by the name of Chitrakoot, Vindhyachal and Dandak most holy and auspicious by wondering in them. [That is, you had gone to the forest on the orders of your parents and to uphold the wishes of others, and had resided in these three forests for some time, thereby purifying them and making them holy and venerated.] (4).

Glory to you! You gave a befitting answer to Indra's deceitful, crooked, cunning and lascivious son (named Jayant) who was in the form of a crow for his despicable and damnable act. [Jayant, in the form of a crow, had pricked at Sita by its beak. Lord Ram had shot an arrow to punish him, but finally forgave him by merely blinding him in one eye. It is believed that crows became one-eyed since this incident.] You had dug a grave (a pit) and buried the demon Viradh in it. You had got the ear and nose of Supernakha, the sister of the demon Ravana, chopped-off when she had come disguised as a young maiden (to lure the Lord with her charms with the intention of killing him), thereby symbolically challenging the might of Ravana, who was the tormentor of the whole world, by insulting him in the guise of maiming his sister. (5).

Glory to you! You are the slayer of (the demons) Khar, Dushan, Trishira, their 14-thousand strong army, and Marich (who had taken the form of a golden deer to lure Lord Ram away from his hermitage so that Ravana could kidnap Sita). You are the liberator of the cadaver-eating vulture named Jatau as well as of the low-caste woman named Sabari. You are an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace. You are faultless, taintless and without blemishes. You are the one who dispels and eliminates the fear and evil effects of the three torments or horrors associated with life, called the Triatap. [These horrors are—Adhyatmik, i.e. those related to spiritual life; Adhibhautik, i.e. those related to the terrestrial world and mundane life on earth; and Adhidaivik which relates to the problems arising from malignant stars and gods.] (6).

Glory to you! You are the slayer of the wicked and proud demon named Kabandh. You had made Sugriv the king (of Kishkindha) after slaying the most powerful Bali. You had collected and properly arranged a huge army of brave monkeys and bears (for your conquest of Lanka, killing of Ravana, and liberation of Sita from her captivity at Lanka). And you had graciously granted the boons of devotion and liberation to Vibhishan who had taken refuge with you. (7).

Glory to you! You had constructed a bridge across the ocean as a playful activity. You had cheerfully grabbed (conquered) Lanka which was beyond the imagination of even Kaal (the god of death), and had killed Ravana in the battle-field along with his entire clan, including his brother, and his huge army, thereby making the three Lokas (i.e. the heaven known as the Swarga Loka, the earth known as the Bhu Loka, and the subterranean world known as the Patal Loka), Indra (King of Gods), Kuber (the God's treasurer) and other protectors of Lokas (or the Lokpals) fearless and free from the horrors of Ravana and his demon race. (8).

Glory to you! After conquering Lanka you had gone back to your capital Ayodhya along with Saumitri (literally the son of mother Sumitra; i.e. Laxman, Ram's brother), Sita, Sugriv, Hanuman and other ministers aboard the plane called 'Pushpak'. Tulsidas cheerfully narrates by way of a ballad about the fact that all the residents of Ayodhya were extremely exhilarated, excited, exuberant, happy and jubilant when Lord Ram became a king and Vaidehi (Sita) became the queen (upon their return to their capital of Ayodhya from fourteen years of exile in the forest). (9).

(44)

जयति
 राज-राजेंद्र, राजीवलोचन, राम,
 नाम कलि-कामतरु, साम-शाली ।
 अनय-अंभोधि-कुंभज, निशाचर-निकर-
 तिमिर घनघोर-खरकिरणमाली ॥1॥
 जयति मुनि-देव-नरदेव दसरत्थके,
 देव-मुनि-वन्द्य किय अवध-वासी ।
 लोकनायक-कोक-शोक-संकट-शमन,
 भानुकुल-कमल-कानन-विकासी ॥2॥
 जयति शृंगार-सर तामरस-दामदुति-
 देह, गुणगेह, विश्वोपकारी ।
 सकल सौभाग्य-सौंदर्य-सुषमारूप,
 मनोभव कोटि गर्वापहारी ॥3॥
 (जयति) सुभग सारंग सुनिखंग सायक शक्ति,
 चारु चर्मासि वर वर्मधारी ।
 धर्मधुरधीर, रघुवीर, भुज-बल अतुल,
 हेलया दलित भूभार भारी ॥4॥
 जयति कलधौत मणि-मुकुट, कुंडल, तिलक-
 झलक भलि भाल, विधु-वदन-शोभा ।
 दिव्य भूषण, बसन पीत, उपवीत,

किय ध्यान कल्याण-भाजन न को भा ।। 5 ।।
 (जयति) भरत-सौमित्रि-शत्रुघ्न-सेवित, सुमुख,
 सचिव-सेवक-सुखद, सर्वदाता ।
 अधम, आरत, दीन, पतित, पातक-पीन
 सकृत् नतमात्र कहि 'पाहि' पाता ।। 6 ।।
 जयति जय भुवन दसचारि जस जगमगत,
 पुन्यमय, धन्य जय रामराजा ।
 चरित-सुरसरित कवि-मुख्य गिरि निःसरित,
 पिबत, मज्जत मुदित सँत-समाजा ।। 7 ।।
 जयति वर्णाश्रमाचारपर नारि-नर,
 सत्य-शम-दम-दया-दानशीला ।
 विगत दुख-दोष, संतोष सुख सर्वदा,
 सुनत, गावत राम राजलीला ।। 8 ।।
 जयति वैराग्य-विज्ञान-वारानिधे,
 नमत नर्मद, पाप-ताप-हर्ता ।
 दास तुलसी चरण शरण संशय-हरण,
 देहि अवलंब वैदेहि-भर्ता ।। 9 ।।

Verse no. 44— Glory to Lord Ram! He is like Indra (the king of Gods) amongst the great kings and emperors. His eyes are as beautiful and enchanting as a lotus flower. His name is like the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree) in the era known as Kaliyug. He gives consolation and reassurance to devotees who have surrendered themselves before him. He is like sage Agastya to dry up the ocean of unrighteous and unethical actions and behaviour. And he is like the powerful Sun to remove (destroy, banish) the grave darkness (of delusions and ignorance) represented by the huge horde of great of demons. (1).

Glory to Lord Ram who is the son of king Dashrath, and the Lord of Gods, sages and seers as well as the humans! He had raised the residents of Ayodhya to such an exalted state that even saints, sages and Gods had begun to sing their glories and laurels, and praised their good fortunes. He is like the sun that removes the sorrows and agonies of the bird known as Chakva (ostrich; the ruddy-goose) representing the various custodians of the world who are called the Lokpals, as well as the one who has made the lotus flowers representing the members of the Solar race bloom and flourish. (2).

Glory to Lord Ram! The light blue tinge of his complexion glows like a garland of blue lotuses developing in a pond of beauty. He is the abode of all divine virtues, the benefactor of the whole world, and is the vanquisher of Kamdeo's pride and vanity with his form that is endowed by astounding charm and beauty, which is an embodiment of good virtues and auspiciousness, and which is most honourable and respected. (3).

Glory to Lord Ram! He wears a crown studded with jewels on his head as well as beautiful ear-rings. He has a Tilak mark on his forehead. [This is a religious symbol marked on the forehead above the nose.] His countenance is as beautiful as the full moon. He is wearing a Pitambar (a seamless length of yellow cloth made of silk which is wrapped around the body), attractive jewelry, and the sacred thread across the shoulder. Is there anyone who has not benefited from such a bewitching, enthralling and enchanting view of Lord Ram that holds the eyes captivated and gives it contentedness? (5).

Glory to Lord Ram! He is being served by Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. He is the wish fulfiller of not only his ministers such as Sugriv and Sumant but also of other devotees. He is the one who saves all (i.e. provides liberation and deliverance to all) from the cycle of birth and death, even those who are sinful, distressed, miserable, wretched and lowly if they bow once before him and plead sincerely by saying 'save me, my Lord!' (6).

Glory to Lord Ram! His fame is shining (i.e. is well known and established) in all the fourteen Bhuvans¹ (i.e. in the entire universe). He is absolutely divine, auspicious, holy and exalted. His life-story has been revealed by the ancient sage Valmiki (i.e. was first narrated or brought to light by him) just like the celestial river Ganges had made its appearance on earth from the mountains (Himalayas). By bathing in this holy river and drinking its water (i.e. by studying the divine story of Lord Ram and implementing its teachings in one's own life), the community of sages and saints remains ever contented and happy. [Here, Tulsidas has likened the story of Lord Ram with the holy river Ganges, for even as the holy water of the river is spiritually purifying by providing the reward of liberation and deliverance from this mortal world, the divine story of Lord Ram is also fully empowered and endowed with a similar characteristics of being the provider of liberation and deliverance to the creature who hears it with devotion and faith.] (7).

Glory to Lord Ram! (Describing the reign of king Ram, Tulsidas says—) During the Lord's famous reign, all men and women followed the honourable and righteous path of life that conformed to the principles set out for them by tradition in accordance to the class of society that belonged to. All of them diligently observed the path of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety. They were all truthful, self-restraint tolerant, benevolent, kind, gracious and charitable by nature. They were free from any kind of sorrows and miseries as well as from worldly corruptions and other faults. They were always contented, happy and blissful by all means, and were always engaged in singing the praises and glories of Lord Ram. (8).

Glory to Lord Ram! He is an ocean of the grand virtues of renunciation and supreme knowledge. He provides solace and comfort to all those who bow reverentially before him in humility (i.e. surrender themselves to him), besides banishing all their miseries and torments that accrue to them due to sins and misdemeanors. Oh the Lord of Vaidehi (i.e. Lord Ram)! Oh the one who removes all doubts and confusions! Tulsidas has taken refuge in your feet, so please give him the solace and succour that are so characteristic of your holy feet (and for which they are so renowned in this world). (9).

[Note—¹The fourteen Bhuvans are the following—(A) The upper worlds called Urdhava Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu, (ii) Bhuvha, (iii) Swaha, (iv) Maha, (v) Janaha, (vi) Tapaha, and (vii) Satyam. (B) The seven nether worlds called Adhaha Loka:— (i) Atal, (ii) Vital, (iii) Satal, (iv) Rasaatal, (v) Talaatal, (vi) Mahaatal, and (vii) Paataal.]

Raag Gauri:

(45)

श्री रामचंद्र कृपालु भजु मन हरण भवभय दारुणं ।
 नवकंज—लोचन, कंज—मुख, कर—कंज, पद कंजारुणं ।।1।।
 कंदर्प अगणित अमित छवि, नवनील नीरद सुंदरं ।
 पट पीत मानहु तडित रुचि शुचि नौमि जनक—सुतावरं ।।2।।
 भजु दीनबंधु दिनेश दानव—दैत्य—वंश—निकंदनं ।
 रघुनंद आनंदकंद कोशलचंद दशरथ—नंदनं ।।3।।
 सिर मुकुट कुंडल तिलक चारु उदारु अंग विभूषणं ।
 आजानुभुज शर—चाप—धर, संग्राम—जित—खरदूषणं ।।4।।
 इति वदति तुलसीदास शंकर—शेष—मुनि—मन रंजनं ।
 मम हृदय—कंज—निवास कुरु, कामादि खल—दल—गंजनं ।।5।।

Verse no. 45—Oh mind! Concentrate on, think of and devote yourself to Lord Ramchandra, the merciful, kind and compassionate Lord! He is the one who can remove the grave fear of birth and death in this world. His eyes are as beautiful as a newly blossomed lotus flower. His face, hands and feet are also like a red-tinged (pink) lotus. (1).

The beauty of his countenance is greater than innumerable Kamdeos (God of beauty and glamour) taken together. The complexion of his body has a blue tinge resembling rain-bearing dark clouds. The Pitambar (a yellow body-wrapping seamless cloth made of silk) is shining and simmering like lightening on his body, the complexion of which is compared with dark clouds. I offer my obeisance to and bow before the Lord of Janak-Suta (i.e. Lord Ram who is the divine husband of Sita, the daughter of Janak) who is a personification of auspiciousness and holiness. (2).

Oh my mind! Concentrate on, think of and devote yourself to (Lord Ram who is) a friend of the distressed and the humble, is as radiant, brilliant and splendorous as the sun, is a destroyer of the race of demons, evil spirits, ogres and Satan (representing evil and sinful creatures in creatures in this world), is the root of all joys and happiness, is symbolically like a moon which shines in the sky symbolizing the kingdom of Kaushal (Ayodhya). (3).

He has a crown that is studded with jewels and gems. He wears large ear-rings in his ears, an enchanting Tilak (religious mark) on his forehead, and beautiful jewelry on each part of his body. His arms are so long that they reach up to his knees. [Such long arms are regarded as auspicious for a king and indicate his long reach and extended influence. He is carrying a bow and an arrow. He has conquered the demons Khar and Dushan in the battle (i.e. he has conquered all the evil forces represented by them). (4).

He grants happiness and joys to the mind and heart of Lord Shiva, the mythical serpent-king known as Shesh, and great sages and hermits. He is the destroyer of enemies in the form of Kaam (lust, passions), Krodh (anger) and Lobha (greed, rapacity and avarice). Tulsidas prays that such a gracious and divine Lord Ram may always reside in his lotus-like heart. (5).

(46)

सदा

राम जपु, राम जपु, राम जपु, राम जपु, मूढ मन, बार बार ।
 सकल सौभाग्य-सुख-खानि जिय जानि शठ, मानि विश्वास वद वेदसारं ।।1।।
 कोशलेन्द्र नव-नीलकंजाभतनु, मदन-रिपु-कंजहृदि-चंचरीकं ।
 जानकीरवन सुखभवन भुवनैकप्रभु, समर-भंजन, परम कारुणीकं ।।2।।
 दनुज-वन-धूमधुज, पीन आजानुभुज, दंड-कोदंडवर चंड बानं ।
 अरुण कर चरण मुख नयन राजीव, गुन-अयन, बहु मयन-शोभा-निधानं ।।3।।
 वासनावृंद-कैरव-दिवाकर, काम-क्रोध-मद-कंज-कानन-तुषारं ।
 लोभ अति मत्त नागेंद्र पंचाननं भक्तहित हरण संसार-भारं ।।4।।
 केशवं, क्लेशहं, केश-वंदित पद-द्वंद्व मंदाकिनी-मूलभूतं ।
 सर्वदानंद-संदोह, मोहापहं, घोर-संसार-पाथोधि-पोतं ।।5।।
 शोक-संदेह-पाथोदपटलानिलं, पाप-पर्वत-कठिन-कुलिशरूपं ।
 संतजन-कामधुक-धेनु, विश्रामप्रद, नाम कलि-कलुष-भंजन अनूपं ।।6।।
 धर्म-कल्पद्रुमाराम, हरिधाम-पथि संबलं, मूलमिदमेव एकं ।
 भक्ति-वैराग्य-विज्ञान-शम-दान-दम, नाम आधीन साधन अनेकं ।।7।।
 तेन तप्तं, हुतं, दत्तेवाखिलं, तेन सर्वं कृतं कर्मजालं ।
 येन श्रीरामनामामृतं पानकृतमनिशमनवद्यमवलोक्य कालं ।।8।।
 श्वपच, खल, भिल्ल, यवनादिहरिलोकगत, नामबल विपुल मति मल न परसी ।
 त्यागि सब आस, संत्रास, भवपास, असि निसित हरिनाम जपु दासतुलसी ।।9।।

Verse no. 46— Raag Ramkali: Oh you foolish mind! Chant Lord Ram's holy name repeatedly, persistently, consistently and constantly at all times because it is the mine and treasure-trove of all good fortunes, auspiciousness, happiness and joy. This is what the Vedas have reiterated and is the essence of their teachings. [Realizing this fact in your heart, and having full belief, faith and conviction in it, you should always pronounce Lord Ram's name.] (1).

The charm and radiance of the beauteous form of Kaushalendra (literally the King of Kaushal, here meaning Lord Ram) is like a newly bloomed blue lotus flower. He is a bee that dwells in the lotus-like heart of the Lord who is an enemy of Kamdeo. [This refers to Lord Shiva who had turned Kamdeo to ashes.] He stays with Janki (i.e. is the constant companion of Sita, as he is her divine husband). He is an abode of bliss, happiness and joys. He is the only Lord of the entire universe. He is a destroyer of enemies in the battle-field. And he is most merciful, kind and compassionate. (2).

He (Lord Ram) is like a wild fire for the forest of demons. [That is, just like the fire destroys big forests, Lord Ram is able to get rid of great demons who stand for evil, dark, decadent, pervert and corrupt tendencies in this world, as well as equally evil thoughts, actions and behaviours.] He holds a beautiful bow and fierce (invincible) arrows in his muscular arms that are so long as to reach the knees. His hands (palms), feet (sole), face and eyes are attractive and alluring like a red lotus. He is an abode of all good virtues and a treasury of beauty that is comparable to numerous Kamdeos taken together. (3).

He is like the sun personified for the purpose of abolishing the negative qualities of Vasanas (worldly yearning, lust and passion for the objects of the senses) symbolized

by the Kumudini (a type of lotus that shrinks in sunlight). Similarly, he is like frost for the purpose of destroying the forest of lotuses symbolizing such negative qualities as Kaam (lust, desire, passion, infatuation and lasciviousness), Krodh (anger), Mada (haughtiness, arrogance), etc. He is like a lion, the king of forest, for the wild and arrogant elephant representing Lobh (greed, avarice, rapacity). He is the slayer of demons for the benefit of his devotees, as well as to remove the burden of the entire world tyrannized by these demons (symbolizing evils and vices; those rascals who are universal tormentors of innocent creatures; those who are miscreants who are sinful, unrighteous, unscrupulous and pervert). (4).

His name is Keshav, and he is the destroyer or eliminator of troubles, tribulations, sorrows and agonies of all sorts. His feet, which are the fount (spring) from where river Ganges had emerged, is worshipped by Lords Brahma (the creator) and Shiva (the annihilator). He is always a bouquet (a treasury) of Anand (bliss, happiness and joy). He is an eliminator of all forms of Moha (attachments, attractions, infatuations and delusions). And he is like a ship to cross the great ocean known as Bhav-Sagar (literally the mortal world of mundane existence that is huge and endless, as well as entrapping for the creature). (5).

Lord Ram is like a strong gust of wind to disperse clouds of sorrows and doubts. He is like a Vajra (thunderbolt; the strong weapon of Indra) for the purpose of reducing to rubble the formidable mountain of sins. His name gives the desired fruits to saints like a Kamdhenu cow does. He is a bestower of bliss, beatitude and felicity. And he is matchless in eliminating all the great sins that are characteristic of Kaliyug. (6).

The holy name of Lord Ram is a like an evergreen garden of Kalpa Trees representing Dharma (auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness). It is like the sanctified meal that is to be accepted by the travelers who are en-route to the abode of the Lord. [That is, the holy name of Lord Ram sustains spiritual seekers of emancipation and salvation; it is the mainstay of those who want liberation and deliverance from this gross delusory world.] It is the fount as well as the foundation of all resources and accomplishments. [That is, the holy name of the Lord is the only means by which one can attain success in any kind of endeavour in this world. All achievements revolve around one's devotion for the Lord and his reliance on his holy name.] The various means of salvation—such as Bhakti (devotion), Vairagya (renunciation), Vigyan (expert and truthful knowledge), Sham (equanimity, restraint), Dam (fortitude, tolerance), Daan (charity) etc.—are all dependant on Lord Ram's holy name. [They subsist on the Lord's name. That is why it is an established tradition to start anything or any kind of work by invoking the Lord's name first at the beginning of the effort or enterprise.] (7).

Those who have constantly, consistently and persistently imbibed this purified nectar of Lord Ram's name in an abiding form and as a matter of natural habit in the present ferocious and cruel era marked by horrors and torments—they are deemed to have done (i.e. they get the benefit of doing) all types of Tapas (penances, austerities, rigid following of codes of conduct), have performed all Yagyas (religious rituals and sacrifices), have given everything in charity, and have done all the sacraments and rituals sanctioned by the Vedas. [That is, the simple name of Lord Ram is a one-window solution for all the problems tormenting the creature. It is one-dose remedy for all ills afflicting the creature. It encapsulates in it all the spiritual rewards that accrue by doing Tapa, Yagya and Vedic rituals etc.] (8).

Numerous Chandals (out-castes), sinners, Bhils (tribal hunters) and Yavans (heretics, non-believers) etc. have gone to the abode of the Lord on the immense strength of Lord Ram's name, and its astounding good effects and potential powers as a liberator and deliverer. All the vices and evils of this world dared not to touch their wisdom and intellect (i.e. these vices could not corrupt or mislead them). Oh Tulsidas! Abandon all fears and all kind of hopes from any other source, and instead chant Lord Ram's holy name which is like a sharp-edged sword to cut through the bindings and snares of this mundane world characterized by delusions and entrapments. (9).

(47)

ऐसी आरती राम रघुबीरकी करहि मन ।
हरन दुखदुंद गोबिंद आनन्दघन ॥1॥
अचरचर रूप हरि, सरबगत, सरबदा बसत, इति बासना धूप दीजै ।
दीप निजबोधगत—कोह—मद—मोह—तम, प्रौढअभिमान चितबृत्ति छीजै ॥2॥
भाव अतिशय विशद प्रवर नैवेद्य शुभ श्रीरमण परम संतोषकारी ।
प्रेम—तांबूल गत शूल संशय सकल, विपुल भव—वासना—बीजहारी ॥3॥
अशुभ—शुभकर्म—घृतपूर्ण दश वर्तिका, त्याग पावक, सतो गुण प्रकासं ।
भक्ति—वैराग्य—विज्ञान दीपावली, अर्पि नीराजनं जगनिवासं ॥4॥
विमल हृदि भवन कृत शांति पर्यंक शुभ, शयन विश्राम श्रीरामराया ।
क्षमा—करुणा प्रमुख तत्र परिचारिका, यत्र हरि तत्र नहिं भेद, माया ॥5॥
एहि आरति—निरत सनकादि, श्रुति, शेष, शिव, देवरिषि, अखिलमुनि तत्त्व—दरसी ।
करै सोइ तरै, परिहरै कामादि मल, वदति इति अमलमति—दास तुलसी ॥6॥

Verse no. 47— Aarti of Lord Ram: Oh mind! Worship and venerate Lord Ram, who is the brave one in the dynasty of king Raghu, by invoking the Lord's glories and magnificent virtues as follows—The Lord is the destroyer of all forms of sorrows and grief. He is the one who eliminates all confusions, doubts, consternations, perplexities and bewilderments. He is known as Govind who is a treasury of immense bliss, happiness, joy, beatitude and felicity. (1).

Both the animate as well as the inanimate world is a manifestation of Lord Hari (Vishnu) who is all-pervading, omnipresent and eternal. [While performing the formal form of worship of the Lord, follow the following procedure—] First, burn the various Vasanas (inherent worldly tendencies; desires, lust pertaining to the sense objects of this material world) symbolically in the form of 'Dhup' (perfumed incense-sticks) that are lighted during formal worship—this will remove all the foul smell of Bhed in the environment. [Bhed is spiritually corrupting sense of duality that incites a creature to differentiate between Saguna or formed and Nirguna or un-formed aspects of the same universal cosmic Lord who is non-dual and immutable.] As the next step, one should light the 'Deepak' (earthen lamps)—that is, he must light the lamp of self-realisation and enlightenment. [That is, the worshipper must strive to become aware of the true nature of the Atma which is his true self and the pure consciousness that is a personification of Brahm, the Supreme Being. He should remove the darkness of ignorance by 'lighting' the lamp of wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment.] This would remove the darkness

symbolized by such negativity as Krodh (anger), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness) and Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations). With this maturity of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment, destroy the inherent inclinations of the mind and intellect called the Chitta Vritis. (2).

After that, offer the ‘sweets’ to the Lord in the form of sincerity and highly devotional emotions—such a pure offering of sweets will be most acceptable to Sri Raman (i.e. Lord Vishnu incarnated as Ram). Next, offer the Lord ‘Tambul’ (betel-leaf and nut) of love and affection. This offering is potent enough to destroy the seed or cause from which all sorts of sorrows, miseries and pains, all sorts of doubts and confusions, and all sorts of worldly passions and yearnings leading to delusions and entrapments arise. (3).

Thereafter, show the Lord ‘light’ of good and auspicious virtues by dipping the wick representing the ten sense organs¹ in the clarified butter (Ghee) of good deeds, and lighted by the fire of renunciation (Tyag). In this way, perform the ‘Aarti’ (ceremonial showing the light of lamps)—symbolized by the eclectic virtues of devotion, renunciation and enlightenment—of the Lord who pervades throughout the creation and is inherently present in it in a subtle, uniform and universal manner. (4).

After performing the Aarti, give ‘rest’ to Lord Ram on a bedstead of peace in the ‘temple’ of your purified heart. Appoint chief ‘maids’ in the form of forgiveness, mercy etc. to serve the Lord there (in your heart as the Lord reclined in it). Wherever Lord Hari (Vishnu; here referring to Lord Ram) lives, there is no room for delusions, confusions and doubts of any kind. (5).

The sages Sankadi, Vedavyas, Shukdeo, Narad and other wise ones, as well as the Gods, Sesh-Nath and Lord Shiva are always engaged in performing such a symbolic ‘Aarti’ of the Lord (as described above). [That is, they worship the Lord in the prescribed manner outlined in this verse.] Tulsidas, who strives to be a humble follower of such exalted and enlightened sages and wise ones (i.e. emulates their example), asserts that those who worship the Lord in this way (as described above) are indeed freed from the evils of Kaam (worldly passions and lust and their corrupting influences) etc., and are also able to cross the Bhav-Sagar (ocean representing this mortal, gross and mundane world of entrapments, the world consisting of the endless cycle of birth and death, and its accompanying horrifying miseries and tribulations). (6).

[Note—¹The 10 sense organs referred to in stanza 4 are the following—the five organs of perception such as eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive.]

(48)

हरति सब आरती आरती रामकी ।
दहन दुख—दोष, निरमूलीनी कामकी ॥1॥
सुरभ सौरभ धूप दीपबर मालिका ।
उड़त अघ—बिहँग सुनि ताल करतालिका ॥2॥

भक्त—हृदि—भवन, अग्यान—तम—हारिनी ।
 बिमल बिग्यानमय तेज—बिस्तारिनी ।।3।।
 मोह—मद—कोह—कलि—कंज—हिमजामिनी ।
 मुक्तिकी दूतिका, देह—दुति दामिनी ।।4।।
 प्रनत—जन—कुमुद—बन—इन्दु—कर—जालिका ।
 तुलसि अभिमान—महिषेस बहु कालिका ।।5।।

Verse no. 48— The 'Aarti' of Lord Ram (i.e. the ceremonial formal form of worship of Lord Ram as narrated in verse no. 47) removes all agonies, distresses, sufferings and pains. It burns (i.e. reduces to ashes) all sorrows and miseries, as well as all the sins and evils. It uproots and completely eliminates all sorts of worldly desires, wants, hopes and expectations. (1).

The symbolic garland consists of fragrant incense-sticks and the best of lighted lamps used for such worship (as described in verse no. 47). Hearing the clapping sound made during the Aarti, the birds represented by one's sins, vices and evil deeds fly off immediately. (2).

The Aarti has the power and potent to illuminate the house of the devotee represented by his heart by destroying the darkness of ignorance and delusions. It spreads the brilliant light of truthful knowledge and wisdom in every direction. (3).

It is like a winter night for the purpose of destroying the lotuses representing Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness), Krodh (anger), and Kali (all the dark evils and vices associated with the world). It is like a lady messenger of the goddess represented by spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. [In other words, the worship of Lord Ram as narrated in the foregoing verses is a harbinger for one's spiritual liberation and deliverance. It heralds one's emancipation and salvation.] This messenger has a body as radiant and dazzling as lightening. [That is, it is very glorious and powerful. It shines and dazzles by its own illumination representing its stupendous spiritual potentials and divine glories. It is as effective as lightening.] (4).

It is like the moonlight that helps the Kumudini flower (a type of lotus; water lily) representing surrendered devotees to bloom and flourish. It is like the many 'Kalikas' (goddess of destruction and devastation) for the purpose of destroying the demon called Mahisasur representing the pride, ego and vanity of Tulsidas. [Mahisasur was the demon who was killed by goddess Durga.] (5).

(50)

देव—

भानुकुल—कमल—रवि, कोटि कंदर्प—छवि, काल—कलि—व्यालमिव वैनतेयं ।
 प्रबल भुजदंड परचंड कोदंड—धर तूणवर विशिख बलमप्रमेयं ।।1।।
 अरुण राजीवदल—नयन, सुषमा—अयन, श्याम तन—कांति वर वारिदाभं ।
 तप्त कांचन—वस्त्र, शस्त्र—विद्या—निपुण, सिद्ध—सुर—सेव्य, पाथोजनाभं ।।2।।
 अखिल लावण्य—गृह, विश्व—विग्रह, परम प्रौढ, गुणगूढ, महिमा उदारं ।
 दुर्घर्ष, दुस्तर, दुर्ग, स्वर्ग—अपवर्ग—पति, भग्न संसार—पादप—कुठारं ।।3।।

शापवश मुनिवधू—मुक्तकृत, विप्रहित, यज्ञ—रक्षण—दक्ष, पक्षकर्ता ।
 जनक—नृप—सदसि शिवचाप—भंजन, उग्र भार्गवागर्व—गरिमापहर्ता ।। 4 ।।
 गुरु—गिरा—गौरवामर—सुदुस्त्यज राज्य त्यक्त, श्रीसहित सौमित्रि—भ्राता ।
 संग जनकात्मजा, मनुजमनुसृत्य अज, दुष्ट—वध—निरत, त्रैलोक्यत्राता ।। 5 ।।
 दंडकारण्य कृतपुण्य पावन चरण, हरण मारीच—मायाकुरंग ।
 बालि बलमत गजराज इव केसरी, सुहृद—सुग्रीव—दुख—राशि—भंग ।। 6 ।।
 ऋक्ष, मर्कट विकट सुभट उद्भट समर, शैल—संकाश रिपु त्रासकारी ।
 बद्धपाथोधि, सुर—निकर—मोचन, सकुल दलन दससीस—भुजबीस भारी ।। 7 ।।
 दुष्ट बिबुधारि—संघात, अपहरण महि—भार, अवतार कारण अनूप ।
 अमल, अनवद्य, अद्वैत, निर्गुण, सगुण, ब्रह्म सुमिरामि नरभूष—रूप ।। 8 ।।
 शेष—श्रुति—शारदा—शंभु—नारद—सनक गनत गुन अंत नहिं तव चरित्र ।
 सोइ राम कामारि—प्रिय अवधपति सर्वदा दासतुलसी—त्रास—निधि—वहित्र ।। 9 ।।

Verse no. 50— Lord Ram is like the sun for making the lotus of the Sun-race to bloom. He has beauty and glamour like millions of Kamdeos taken together. He is like Garuda (the heavenly eagle or heron who is a vehicle of Vishnu) to gobble-up the serpents in the form of Kaliyug. He is holding a mighty and powerful bow and arrow in his strong arms, and bears a quiver (tied around his waist). His valour and strength are measureless (i.e. unmatched and stupendous). (1).

His eyes are red like the petals of the red-coloured lotus flower. He is a treasury of splendour, radiance, beauty, charm, magnificence, grandeur and goodness of all kind. The beautiful radiant glow of his dark complexioned body is akin to the dark rain-bearing clouds. He is clad in Pitambar which is yellow-coloured like heated gold. He is an expert in weaponry and art of warfare. [That is, he is an expert and skilled warrior.] He is worshipped (venerated, adored) by mystics and Gods alike. And the celestial Lotus (atop which the creator was born) had emerged from his navel. [This refers to the cosmic form of Vishnu known as the Viraat Purush. While the Lord was reclining on the bedstead of the serpent Shesh-Nath that floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar, a lotus had emerged from his navel. The creator Brahma was seated on its petals.] (2).

He is the abode or treasury of all beauty and charms in existence. The whole world (creation) is his image; it is the Lord who has revealed himself in the form of this creation. He is very qualified, highly acclaimed and full of mysterious (unknown or beyond comprehension) qualities and virtues. His fame and glory are measureless and fathomless. He is invincible. His activities are beyond understanding by anyone. It is very difficult to understand (or recognise) him and his true form. He is the Lord of heaven and salvation. And he is equivalent to an axe for the purpose of cutting out entirely from its root or foundation (or uprooting and completely eliminating) this mortal world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death. [That is, Lord Ram is the one who can provide liberation and deliverance to the soul from the fetters that shackle the creature to this mundane existence of transmigration.] (3).

He had liberated Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, from the curse (that had transformed her into a stone). He was very careful, agile and diligent in protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra (from being defiled by the demons). He always favours his devotees, dependants and followers. And he had vanquished (removed) the famed pride, vanity and arrogance of the haughty sage named Bhargav (i.e. sage Parashuram) by

breaking Lord Shiva's bow in the assembly of king Janak. [This refers to the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita wherein Parashuram had intervened because he was annoyed at the breaking of Lord Shiva's bow as he had regarded this incident as an insult of Shiva. Later on, however, he was subdued by Lord Ram, and had surrendered to the Lord in humiliation.] (4).

In order to keep the honour of the words of his father, he, accompanied by Saumitra (his brother Laxman) and Sri (Sita, Lord Ram's divine consort), had willingly renounced the kingdom (of Ayodhya) which even the gods would find difficult to forego (because of its richness, wealth, opulence, magnificence, fame and grandeur). Thereafter, he was accompanied by brother Laxman and wife Sita in engaging himself in maverick worldly activities that culminated in the killing of the cruel demons including Ravana with the express purpose of affording protection to the three worlds (i.e. the entire creation that was being tyrannized by the demons), in spite of the fact that the Lord is without any birth and the supreme transcendental Brahm himself personified. (5).

He had sanctified the (cursed) Dandak forest by his holy feet. He had eliminated (killed) the deceitful and crooked demon named Marich who was disguised as a deer. He was like a lion for the purpose of slaying Bali who was like a mad, wild and arrogant elephant. He is the remover of all sorrows and miseries of Sugriv (the monkey king). And he is the one who eliminates all kinds of sorrows, miseries, grief, agonies, troubles and tribulations of all the creatures who seek his refuge and shelter, and for whom he is the Lord who is most benevolent, dear, kind and graceful. (6).

Accompanied by fierce, very brave and valiant monkeys and bears, he frightened colossus demon warriors—who were all huge like Kumbhkaran—in the battle-field. He had bridged the formidable ocean, had liberated the hordes of Gods who were held captive by Ravana, and had destroyed the 10-headed and 20-armed strong Ravana along with his entire clan of demons. (7).

I remember (worship, venerate and adore) Lord Ram who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm as a human being for the purpose of removing the burden of the world by killing the hordes of cruel, evil and wicked demons who were highly inimical to the Gods, who is without any attributes and gross forms, who is unparalleled and without any comparison, who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure, who is faultless and untainted, who is non-dual and one single whole, who is primarily invisible, without any forms and qualities, but who has willingly assumed a visible, gross form with characteristics by the virtue of his voluntary association with Maya (delusions), and who is the Emperor and King of kings. (8).

Lord Ram—whose stupendous fame, astounding glories, eclectic virtues and noble qualities are being constantly sung by Sesh-Nath (the legendary serpent), the Vedas (the holy scriptures), Saraswati (the goddess of knowledge, wisdom and speech), Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods and the concluder of creation), the celestial sages Narad and Sankadi etc., but who are unable to describe them—is the same Lord who is very dear to Lord Shiva and is the king of Ayodhya. He is also the Lord who is like a ship to ferry Tulsidas across the ocean of sorrows, distress, miseries and agonies in which he finds himself trapped. (9).

(51)

देव—

जानकीनाथ, रघुनाथ, रागादि—तम—तरणि, तारुण्यतनु, तेजधामं ।
 सच्चिदानंद, आनंदकंदाकरं, विश्व—विश्राम, रामाभिरामं ॥1॥
 नीलनव—वारिधर—सुभग—सुभकांति, कटि पीत कौशेय वर वसनधारी ।
 रत्न—हाटक—जटित—मुकुट—मंडित—मौलि, भानु—शत—सदृश उद्योतकारी ॥2॥
 श्रवण कुंडल, भाल तिलक, भ्रू रुचिर अति, अरुण अंभोज लोचन विशालं ।
 वक्र अवलोक, त्रैलोक शोकापहं, मार—रिपु—हृदय—मानस—मरालं ॥3॥
 नासिका चारु, सुकपोल, द्विज वज्रदुति, अधर बिंबोपमा, मधुरहासं ।
 कंठदर, चिबुक वर, वचन गंभीरतर, सत्य—संकल्प, सुरत्रास—नासं ॥4॥
 सुमन सुविचित्र नव तुलसिकादल—युतं मृदुल वनमाल उर भ्राजमानं ।
 भ्रमत आमोदवश मत्त मधुकर—निकर, मधुरतर मुखर कुर्वन्ति गानं ॥5॥
 सुभग श्रीवत्स, केयूर, कंकण, हार, किंकिणी—रटनि कटि—तट रसालं ।
 वाम दिशि जनकजासीन—सिंहासनं कनक—मृदुवल्लिवत तरु तमालं ॥6॥
 आजानु भुजदंड, कोदंड—मंडित वाम बाहु, दक्षिण पाणि बाणमेकं ।
 अखिल मुनि—निकर, सुर, सिद्ध, गंधर्व वर नमत नर नाग अवनिप अनेकं ॥7॥
 अनघ, अविच्छिन्न, सर्वज्ञ, सर्वेश, खलु सर्वतोभद्र—दाताऽसमाकं ।
 प्रणतजन—खेद—विच्छेद—विद्या—निपुण नौमि श्रीराम सौमित्रिसाकं ॥8॥
 युगल पदपद्म सुखसद्मपद्मालयं, चिन्ह कुलिशादि शोभाति भारी ।
 हनुमंत—हृदि विमल कृत परममंदिर, सदा दासतुलसी—शरण शोकहारी ॥9॥

Verse no. 51— Lord Raghunath (literally the Lord of the Raghu dynasty; here meaning Lord Ram), who is the beloved husband of Sita, is like the sun for the purposing of destroying the darkness represented by the negative qualities of Raag and Dwesh (attachments and infatuations on the one hand, and envy, jealousy and discord on the other hand respectively). He has a youthful body. He is a treasury of radiance, glory, energy, dynamism and splendour. He is an embodiment of the virtues of Sat (truth), Chit (consciousness) and Anand (bliss, beatitude and felicity). He is indeed a mind of extreme bliss, cheerfulness, happiness and joyousness. He bestows or grants the boon of peace and tranquility to the world. He is very beautiful in this aspect (here meaning very charitable in bountifully providing all these blessings to the people of the world, specially his devotees). (1).

The radiance of his countenance and form is as beautiful and auspicious as that of fresh rain-bearing dark clouds. He wears a silk Pitambar (silk cloth) around his waist. He is adorned by a golden crown which is studded with gems, and which is as magnificent and splendid as hundreds of suns shining simultaneously. (2).

He wears ear-rings and has a Tilak mark (a religious sign) marked on his forehead. His eye-brows are very attractive and charming. His eyes are large like a red lotus, with which he glances obliquely (i.e. attractively, enchantingly, bewitchingly and fascinatingly). He is like a Swan in the lake of Lord Shiva's heart who had slayed Kamdeo (the God of passion and lust). And he removes the sorrows, miseries and distresses of the three Lokas (i.e. the entire creation). (3).

His nose is beautiful (attractive and well-formed, as if chiseled), his cheeks are attractive and glowing, his teeth glitter and glisten like diamonds, his lips are red like the fruits of beetle, his smile is sweet and enchanting, his throat is like a conch-shell, and his chin is also very attractive. His words are very wise, meaningful and serious (i.e. he does not speak unnecessarily and useless things). He is true to his words and vows. And he is the destroyer of the sorrows, miseries, torments, tribulations and distresses of all kinds for the Gods. (4).

His chest is adorned by a soft garland of multi-coloured flowers and newly plucked leaves of Tulsi (basil plant). Groups of bumble-bees are attracted towards the garland due to the fragrance of its flowers, and hum around it. (5).

His chest has a beautiful mark of 'Srivatsa' imprinted on it. [The Srivatsa is the footprint of sage Brighu who was once so annoyed that he had kicked Lord Vishnu on his chest. The Lord is so forgiving and loving that instead of casting his wrath on Bhrgu he had accepted it as mark of the sage's fearlessness and confidence of devotion in the Lord as well as his sense of closeness to him that he promised to bear it for ever.] His arms have arm-bands, and wrists have bracelets. An attractive garland adorns his neck, and a beautiful 'Taagri' around his waist. [The Taagri is an ornament that is worn around the waist, and it has tiny bells that jingle when the wearer moves.] Sita is seated to his left on the throne, and she appears adorable like a golden creeper near the magnificent Tamaal tree (the black catechu tree). [Here, Sita is compared to the golden-coloured creeper, and Lord Ram to the black catechu tree around which this creeper is twined.] (6).

His arms stretch up to the knees. He holds a bow in his left arm and an arrow in his right arm. He is shown respect by all the sages, seers, hermits etc., the Gods, the Siddhas (mystics), the best of Gandharvas (celestial musicians), the humans, the serpents and numerous kings and emperors who bow their heads before him. (7).

He is without sins and faults. He is immutable, indivisible, constant, seamless and eternal. He is all-knowing, all-wise and omniscient. He is the Lord of all. He is the one who certainly looks after the welfare and well-being of his devotees, followers, dependants, subjects and subordinates. He is fully able, competent and expert in the art of removing the sorrows and miseries of those who have taken his refuge and shelter. I (Tulsidas) bow my head most reverentially before such a Lord Ram who is accompanied by Laxman (his brother). (8).

His two holy and august feet are the abode of bliss and happiness, as well as of Kamla (Laxmi). [Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, serves his feet. The Lord's holy feet are the providers of all happiness and joy in this world.] These feet of the Lord are adorned by the mark of Vajra (the invincible weapon of Indra) and forty-eight other marks of holiness and divinity. These feet are enshrined in the temple represented by the pure and holy subtle heart of Hanuman who is the greatest devotee of the Lord. [That is, Hanuman always these holy feet of Lord Ram and has enshrined them in his heart like a deity is consecrated in a temple.] Tulsidas says that he has surrendered himself (i.e. has taken refuge and shelter) in the holy august feet of such a Lord Ram who is an eliminator or remover of all his sorrows, miseries, pains, grief, distress, torments, troubles and tribulations. (9).

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देव—

कोशलाधीश, जगदीश, जगदेकहित, अमितगुण, विपुल विस्तार लीला ।
 गायंति तव चरितसुपवित्र श्रुति शेष शुक शंभु सनकादि मुनि मननशीला ।।1।।
 वारिचर—वपुष धरि भक्त—निस्तारपर, धरणिकृत नाव महिमातिगुर्वी ।
 सकल यज्ञांशमय उग्र विग्रह क्रोड़, मर्दि दनुजेश उद्धरण उर्वी ।।2।।
 कमठ अति विकट तनु कठिन पृष्ठोपरी, भ्रमत मंदर कंडु—सुख मुरारी ।
 प्रकटकृत अमृत, गो, इंदिरा, इंदु, वृंदारकावृंद—आनंदकारी ।।3।।
 मनुज—मुनि—सिद्ध—सुर—नाग—त्रासक, दुष्ट दनुज द्विज—धर्म—मरजाद—हर्ता ।
 अतुल मृगराज—वपुधरित, विद्वरित अरि, भक्त प्रह्लाद—अहलाद—कर्ता ।।4।।
 छलन बलि कपट—वटुरूप वामन ब्रह्म, भुवन पर्यंत पद तीन करणं ।
 चरण—नख—नीर त्रैलोक—पावन परम, विबुध—जननी—दुसह—शोक हरणं ।।5।।
 क्षत्रियाधीश—करि निकर नव—केसरी, परशुधर विप्र—ससि—जलदरूपं ।
 बीस भुजदंड दससीस खंडन चंड वेग सायक नौमि राम भूपं ।।6।।
 भूमिभर—भार—हर, प्रकट परमात्मा, ब्रह्म नररूपधर भक्तहेतू ।
 वृष्णि—कुल—कुमुद—राकेश राधारमण, कंस—बंसाटवी—धूमकेतू ।।7।।
 प्रबल पाखंड महि—मंडलाकुल देखि, निंद्यकृत अखिल मख कर्म—जालं ।
 शुद्ध बोधैकघन, ज्ञान—गुणधाम, अज, बौद्ध—अवतार वंदे कृपालं ।।8।।
 कालकलिजनित—मल—मलिनमन सर्वनर मोह—निशि—निबिडयवनांधकारं ।
 विष्णुयश पुत्र कलकी दिवाकर उदित दासतुलसी हरण विपतिभारं ।।9।।

Verse no. 52— Oh the king of Kaushal (Ayodhya)! Oh the Lord of the world (i.e. Lord Ram)! You are the only benefactor of the world, and the only one who cares for its good, well-being and welfare. Your measureless and countless qualities and virtues have spread widely everywhere (i.e. are known everywhere). The four Vedas, the Sesh-Nath, sages Shukdeo and Sankadi along with and other wise and thoughtful sages and saints, as well as Lord Shiva—all sing laurels of your glorious virtues and holy characters. (1).

You had assumed the form of a huge fish and made the earth a boat to take (pull or tug or row) to safety your devotees and followers during the great dooms-day deluge. Your divine glories are immeasurable and astounding. You are a complete embodiment of all the aspects of the Yagyas (fire sacrifices, sanctified rituals, etc.). You had liberated the earth from the clutches of the demon Hiranyaaksha who had a colossus body by slaying him in your divine incarnation as a Boar (known as the 'Varaaha'). (2).

Oh Murari! At the time of the legendary churning of the ocean (by the demons and Gods in search of nectar of life or the elixir called Amrit), you had taken the form of the great tortoise (the 'Kashap'; the turtle) and had borne the weight of the Mandraachal mountain on your back, thereby preventing it from sinking into the ocean bed, and the friction caused by its rotation was like a mere itch on your back. As a result of the churning, you had caused to be produced the Amrit (elixir of eternal life), the Kamdhenu cow (the all wish-fulfilling cow of Gods), Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity), and the Moon—all of which gave a lot of joy to the Gods. (3).

By taking the form of the most ferocious and strong form of Lord 'Nrisingh' (literally one who was half man and half lion), you had torn apart the evil demon

Hiranyakashipu who was tormenting humans, hermits, mystics, Gods and serpents (i.e. all creatures), was destroying and transgressing the sanctity of the laws of Dharma (laws of auspicious and righteous conduct), and tyrannizing the Brahmins (who were the guardians of Dharma). This great act of protection and redemption done by you had made the most exalted devotee named Prahalad overwhelmed with emotions, happiness and joys. [Briefly, Prahalad, who was the son of the demon Hiranyakashipu, was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. His father did not approve of it, and since the son would not stop worshipping the Lord, the demon began torturing Prahalad. Finally one day, the demon drew a sword to kill his son and challenged him to reveal his Lord from the pillar of the palace if ever he was in existence. It was then that Lord Vishnu manifested as Nrisingh to kill this demon. Vishnu had to assume this unconventional form because of boon granted to the demon that he would neither be killed by a human or an animal. So the Lord took the middle path of becoming a half man and a half lion.] (4).

Taking the form of a Brahmin dwarf mendicant known as 'Vaaman', you had asked the demon king Bali (Lord of the nether-world) for land that can be measured by your three steps, and having him promise it to you, you had measured the entire universe in those three steps. At the time (of measurement), the holy water (i.e. river Ganges) had emerged from your toe-nails. Having thus banished Bali to the subterranean world, you had returned (restored) the Lordship of the celestial and terrestrial worlds to Indra, and had thereby removed the cause of sorrow of Aditi, the mother of Gods. (5).

You had manifested yourself in the form of Parashuram who was like a lion for the purpose of crushing the herd of elephants represented by haughty and arrogant Sahastrabahu and other Khastriya kings. You are like a rain-bearing cloud that nourishes the crop representing Brahmins. [That is, you sustain and protect Brahmins.] Similarly, as Lord Ram you had reduced to crushed (killed) the demon named Ravana, who had ten heads and twenty arms, with your fierce and powerful arrows. I bow my head reverentially before such a Lord Ram who is the Emperor of kings. (6).

Inspite of you being the absolute supreme transcendental Brahm who has no forms and attributes, you had still assumed the form of human being in order to please your devotees and for removing the great burden represented by evil demons from this earth. You are equivalent to the full moon which helped the lily flower representing the Vrishni-race to blossom and flourish. In this respect, you were the beloved consort of Radha, and were like a terrible fire to destroy the forest representing the clan of king Kansha and his kith and kin. [Tulsidas is referring to Lord Krishna in this stanza.] (7).

In order to liberate the earth from the entrapping net of blind, meaningless and false doctrines compounded by heresies, irrelevant practices, obsolete beliefs and obscure rituals that accompanied formal forms of worship such as elaborate fire sacrifices and other rituals and practices (as perpetrated by the Brahmins on the pretext of religion and salvation), you had manifested yourself as Lord Buddha. I bow my head in reverence to your divine form as Lord Buddha who had purity of wisdom, who was an embodiment of high enlightenment, who was extremely self-realised, who was endowed with all the magnificent and glorious virtues and characters one can think of, who was without a birth as he was eternal, and who was most merciful, kind, graceful and compassionate. (8).

The mind, intellect, sub-conscious and heart of all the people have been darkened, corrupted and maligned by the evil effects of sins and vices in the present age of Kaliyug. You will manifest yourself as a Kalki-Avtar (literally an incarnation in Kaliyug) in the

form of a son in the household of a Brahmin named Vishnu Yash. This manifestation would be like a sun to remove the pitch darkness represented by Mlechas (स्लेच्छ, literally meaning the impure-ones) in the night represented by Moha (worldly attachments, delusions and ignorance). Oh Lord! Remove the burden of troubles and tribulations being faced and suffered from by Tulsidas. (9).

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देव—

सकल सौभाग्यप्रद सर्वतोभद्र—निधि, सर्व, सर्वेश, सर्वाभिरामं ।
 शर्व—हृदि—कंज—मकरंद—मधुकर रुचिर—रूप, भूपालमणि नौमि रामं ॥1॥
 सर्वसुख—धाम गुणग्राम, विश्रामपद, नाम सर्वसपदमति पुनीतं ।
 निर्मलं, शांत, सुविशुद्ध, बोधायतन, क्रोध—मद—हरण, करुणा—निकेतं ॥2॥
 अजित, निरुपाधि, गोतीतमव्यक्त, विभुमेकमनवद्यमजमद्वितीयं ।
 प्राकृतं, प्रकट परमात्मा, परमहित, प्रेरकानंत वंदे तुरीयं ॥3॥
 भूधरं, सुन्दरं, श्रीवरं, मदन—मद—मथन सौन्दर्य—सीमातिरम्यं ।
 दुष्प्राप्य, दुष्प्रेक्ष्य, दुस्तर्क्य, दुष्पार, संसारहर, सुलभ, मृदुभाव—गम्यं ॥4॥
 सत्यकृत, सत्यरत, सत्यव्रत सर्वदा, पुष्ट, संतुष्ट, संकष्टहारी ।
 धर्मवर्मनि ब्रह्मकर्मबोधैक, विप्रपूज्य, ब्रह्मण्यजनप्रिय, मुरारी ॥5॥
 नित्य, निर्मम, नित्यमुक्त, निर्मान, हरि, ज्ञानघन, सच्चिदानंद मूलं ।
 सर्वरक्षक सर्वभक्षकाध्यक्ष, कूटस्थ, गूढार्चि, भक्तानुकूलं ॥6॥
 सिद्ध—साधक—साध्य, वाच्य—वाचकरूप, मंत्र—जापक—जाप्य, सृष्टि—स्रष्टा ।
 परम कारण, कंजनाभ, जलदाभतनु, सगुण, निर्गुण, सकल दृश्य—द्रष्टा ॥7॥
 व्योम—व्यापक, विरज, ब्रह्म, वरदेश, वैकुण्ठ, वामन, विमल ब्रह्मचारी ।
 सिद्ध—वृंदारकावृंदवदित सदा, खंडि पाखंड—निर्मूलकारी ॥8॥
 पूरनानंदसंदोह, अपहरण संमोह—अज्ञान, गुण—सन्निपातं ।
 वचन—मन—कर्म—गत शरण तुलसीदास त्रास—पाथोधि इव कुंभजातं ॥9॥

Verse no. 53—I bow to Lord Ram, who bestows all welfare, is a store-house of all auspiciousness, is revealed in the form of the universe, is the Lord of the universe, the provider of happiness and joy to all, is like a bumble-bee for the purpose of drinking the nectar stored in the lotus-like heart of Lord Shiva, is of attractive and captivating beauty, and is the most exalted amongst the kings of this world (1).

Oh Lord Ram! You are the abode of all happiness and comforts, a treasury of all virtues, and the bestower of supreme bliss. Your name can provide all desired things in this world, and it is most pure and holy. You are pure, clean and holy (uncorrupt; untainted; divine); you are calm, tranquil, peaceful, placid; you are an embodiment of knowledge and wisdom; you are the destroyer of anger, pride, vanity, arrogance and hypocrisy; and you are an abode of mercy, grace and kindness (2).

You are invincible, beyond honour and attributes, and beyond the reach of the mind and perception of the senses (i.e. beyond comprehension). You cannot be described. You are all-pervading, ubiquitous and omnipresent, without a second, without faults, without birth, without any match (i.e. you are unique, peerless and one of your own kind

that has no parallel). In spite of being a Parmatma (Supreme Atma, the Supreme Being), you manifested yourself in this world along with your divine Shakti known as Prakriti. [That is, in spite of being the Supreme Being who is invisible, formless, attributeless and the all-pervading cosmic Consciousness, you had manifested on this earth as a human being along with your cosmic Shakti, or your cosmic energy and dynamism, that revealed itself alongside you in the form of Sita. The same Shakti in its macrocosmic form is known as Prakriti or Mother Nature.] You are the greatest benefactor and the greatest well-wisher of all, and it is you who give inspiration to all. You are without an end, are infinite and eternal. Your divine form has two manifestations—one is the macrocosmic form that is subtle, invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing and without any attributes, and the other is the microcosmic form that is visible, has attributes and a gross body. I bow my head to such a Lord Ram who is majestic and beyond definition (3).

You bear (i.e. sustain) the earth, are magnificent, Lord of Laxmi, crush the pride and vanity of Kamdeo who is proud of his beauty, are the benchmark of magnificence, and are most attractive and pleasant. It is very difficult to attain you and have your Darshan (divine or holy viewing). No one can understand you by logic (and using one's intelligence), and it is also very difficult to measure (or understand) your marvels and worldly activities. You can, by your grace and kindness, remove (liberate or deliver) one from the journey of birth and death (transmigration of soul) which constitutes this existence (the mundane world as we know it). You give Darshan (manifest yourself) to your devotees easily (without much effort or cumbersome rituals), and you are easily attainable by simplicity, humility, love, affection and devotion (4).

You create 'Truth', live in 'Truth', and are true to your vows and words. You are always healthy and endowed with robust and divine energy and powers. You are ever (eternally) contented, and are the remover of great sorrows, miseries and tribulations. Dharma (righteous, scrupulousness, probity, propriety) is your shield. You are matchless in the knowledge and understanding of Brahm (the formless, attributeless, absolute, all-pervading Truth; the cosmic supreme Consciousness) and Karma (assigned duties). You are worshipped by the Brahmins, are the beloved of Brahmins as well as devotees, and are the slayer of the demon Mur (5).

Oh Hari! You are constant, without attachments, eternally free, without pride, vanity or ego, eliminator of sins, embodiment of wisdom, abode of supreme bliss, and the root cause of everything. You are the protector of all, the Lord of Yam (who devours all in the form of death), Kuthastha (i.e. unchangeable, immovable, steady, constant, exalted, secret), endowed with (or possessed of) mystical glory, splendour and radiance, have stupendous mercy, and show graciousness towards your devotees (6).

You are the goal and the seeker of that goal. You possess all the mystical powers that exist in this creation, making you a Siddha or one who is empowered, attained, realised and enlightened. You are the speaker as well as the speech. You are the Mantra (divine words representing God; a group of syllables or alphabets having magical charm), the chanter of those Mantras, as well as the Divine-Being himself represented by those Mantras. You are the creation as well as the creator, and you are the ultimate cause (reason) of both of them. The celebrated legendary Lotus (representing purity) has emerged from your navel. Your complexion is as beautiful as the dark rain-bearing cloud. You are both the Saguna (formed) as well as the Nirguna (formless, attributeless) one. You are manifested in the form of this entire visible creation, and at the same time

you are its observer—both of these are you. [This seems incredulous on the face of it, but when one studies the principles of metaphysics one learns that everything in creation is a manifestation of one single Truth known as the cosmic Consciousness. And since this single entity has revealed itself in every conceivable form in this creation, including the creation itself, it naturally follows that both the seer and the thing seen, both the creator and the created, both the worshipper and the object of worship, and so on and so forth are fundamentally the same entity.] (7).

You are all-pervading and all encompassing like the sky. You are without any attachments and delusions. You are the supreme Brahm, and the Lord of the boon-giving Gods. One of your abodes is in Vaikunth (i.e. inspite of you being omnipresent and all-pervading, your divine form as Lord Vishnu lives in the highest heaven known as Vaikunth). You had revealed your self as the young Brahmachari (a celibate Brahmin) known as Vaaman. [This refers to Lord Vishnu's manifestation as the dwarf mendicant known as Vaaman, literally meaning a 'dwarf'.] Siddhas (the attained and enlightened ones) and the congregation of Gods always worship and venerate you. You break (remove, uproot) deceit, crookedness, fraud, heresy, false doctrines, hypocrisy, haughtiness etc., and render them rootless (i.e. you make them totally ineffective, in vain, harmless and of no consequence) (8).

You are a treasure of pure and supreme bliss. You are the eliminator (remover) of ignorance, inprudence and the three traditional Gunas (qualities) that act as torments for all the creatures. [These three Gunas are known as Satvic, Rajsic and Tamsic. They are present in each individual in varying combinations. This decides the character, nature and personality of the individual.] This fellow Tulsidas has taken complete shelter in your (Lord Ram's) holy feet, and has surrendered himself before you with his mind, heart and deeds (i.e. in totality, completely, without any reservations whatsoever). You are like sage Agastya personified for the purpose of drying-up the ocean of fear of this mundane existence. [Legend has it that sage Agastya had drunk the entire ocean in three gulps. So the allusion to this incident by Tulsidas means that Lord Ram is capable of removing all types of fears arising out of mundane existence in this fearsome world.] (9).

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देव—

विश्व—विख्यात, विश्वेश, विश्वायतन, विश्वमरजाद, व्यालारिगामी ।

ब्रह्म, वरदेश, वागीश, व्यापक, बिमल, बिपुल बलवान, निर्वानस्वामी ।।1।।

प्रकृति, महत्त्व, शब्दादि गुण, देवता व्योम, मरुदग्नि, अमलांबु, उर्वी ।

बुद्धि, मन, इंद्रिय, प्राण, चित्तातमा, काल, परमाणु, चिच्छक्ति गुर्वी ।।2।।

सर्वमेवात्र त्वद्रूप भूपालमणी! व्यक्तमव्यक्त, गतभेद, बिष्णो ।

भुवन भवदंग, कामारि—वंदित, पदद्वंद्व मंदाकिनी—जनक, जिष्णो ।।3।।

आदिमध्यांत, भगवंत! त्वं सर्वगतमीश, पश्यन्ति ये ब्रह्मवादी ।

यथा पट—तंतु, घट—मृत्तिका, सर्प—स्रग, दारु करि, कनक—कटकांगदादी ।।4।।

गूढ, गंभीर, गर्वघ्न, गूढार्थवित, गुप्त, गोतीत, गुरु, ग्यान—ग्याता ।

ग्येय, ग्यानप्रिय, प्रचुर गरिमागार, घोर—संसार—पर, पार दाता ।।5।।

सत्यसंकल्प, अतिकल्प, कल्पांतकृत, कल्पनातीत, अहि तल्पवासी ।
 वनज—लोचन, वनज—नाभ, वनदाभ—वपु, वनचरध्वज—कोटि—लावण्यरासी ॥ 6 ॥
 सुकर, दुःकर, दुराराध्य, दुर्व्यसनहर, दुर्ग, दुर्द्धर्ष, दुर्गार्तिहर्ता ।
 वेदगर्भाभिर्कादर्भ—गुणगर्व, अर्वागपर—गर्व—निर्वाप—कर्त्ता ॥ 7 ॥
 भक्त—अनुकूल, भवशूल—निर्मूलकर, तूलअघ—नाम पावक—समानं ।
 तरल तृष्णातमी—तरणि, धरणीधरण, शरण—भयहरण, करुणानिधानं ॥ 8 ॥
 बहुल वृंदारकावृंद—वंदारु—पद—द्वंद्व मंदार—मालोर—धारी ।
 पाहि मामीश संताप—संकुल सदा दास तुलसी प्रणत रावणारी ॥ 9 ॥

Verse no. 54—Oh Lord Ram! You are famed in the world, the Lord of the entire universe, an embodiment of this creation, an embodiment of the law (sanctified code of behaviour) of the world, and one who mounts Garud (an eagle). You are Brahm, the Supreme Being. You are the Lord of Brahma (the creator) and other Gods who are empowered to give boons, as well as the Lord of speech and knowledge. You are all-pervading, ubiquitous, omnipresent, most holy and divine, almighty, and the patron God of the most exalted stage of the soul when it reaches its emancipation and salvation (1).

The Primary Nature, the best and most excellent elements and essence of creation known as the Tattwas, the 'word', the various feelings (sense of touch), the perception of sight (visible form), taste and smell, the three Gunas known as 'Sata' (truthfulness and the best quality in creation), 'Raja' (the second quality of all living beings which produce desires) and 'Tama' (the third and the meanest quality of creatures producing malignant tendencies), all the Gods, the five elements of creation such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth, the intellect, wisdom and mind, the ten sense organs¹, the five Prans (life giving vital winds or airs)², thought, mind and concentration, the Atma or soul, the Kaal (factor time or death), the Parmaanu (i.e. the 'atom' which is the basic unit of all things in this creation), and the great 'Chaitanya'—the life giving Consciousness etc.—all these are your (Lord Ram's) various forms. Oh the best among the kings! You are everything which is visible as well as invisible. You reside uniformly, universally and in a seamless continuity in the entire creation. This whole creation is but only a fraction of your cosmic 'Self'. Lord Shiva worships and venerates your holy feet, and river Ganges has emerged from them. You are all conquering and ever victorious (2-3).

Oh God! You are the beginning, the present and the end; you prevail in all, are ubiquitous and omnipresent. Oh Lord! Those wise-ones who have attained the true knowledge of Brahm (the Supreme Being; the cosmic Consciousness that is the eternal, formless, universal and all-pervading Truth) see you as the basic ingredient (composition, constituent, essence or basic element) in all things in this creation like cotton is present in cloth, mud is present in an earthen-pitcher, a garland can be visualized in the rounded form of a serpent, wood is inherent in or integral to a wooden elephant, and gold is the basic element that is moulded to give it another name such as a bracelet, and armlet and other such ornament made of gold. [We call a golden bracelet a 'bracelet' and not gold, but we don't realise that the basic and intrinsic value of this bracelet is in the quantity and purity of gold that it contains. We would not value a similarly designed bracelet if it is made of iron, would we? Similarly, this creation just wouldn't exist without Lord Ram in his all-pervading cosmic form known as the supreme Consciousness. This 'Consciousness' is the primary 'atom' that acts as the basic building block of everything that exists in this creation. Just like we can't see the atom but see its manifestation in the

form of a physical body or thing, we cannot see the Consciousness hidden in the gross form that this creation takes. But the very fact that 'life' exists in this creation is enough proof of the presence of the Consciousness just like the existence of anything proves that there are atoms in it. The wise perception of this creation is to see the same universal Truth known as Consciousness that is hidden behind the external façade of physical characteristics which vary from one individual to another. Lord Ram personifies this universal Truth and the cosmic Consciousness.] (4).

In a similar way you are very mysterious and strange (it is too difficult to understand you). You are solemn and serious. You are a vanquisher of pride, vanity and haughtiness. You are the one who knows all the secrets because you are omniscient, and you are the 'secret' itself. [The 'secret' here refers to the Atma or the pure conscious soul that resides in the gross body of an individual. Nothing is hidden from the Lord because he lives in the heart as the Atma which is privy to all the thoughts and emotions of the creature.] You are beyond the reach of the mind and perception by the sense organs. You are the preceptor (teacher) for the whole world (because you are all-knowing and the Supreme Being). You fully attained or expert in wisdom, an embodiment of knowledge, and one who loves the virtues of true enlightenment, knowledge and wisdom. You are a store-house or treasury or a fount of great renown, fame, eminence and respect (i.e. you are worthy of it). You can help a creature to cross this huge ocean of mundane, deluding existence consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death (5).

You are true to your words. You can annihilate the world as well as the universe (you are almighty and the concluder of creation). No one can imagine or measure you by his mind and intellect. You reside (recline) on the bed made of Sesh Nath. [This refers to Lord Vishnu who reclines on the bed made by the coiled body of the celestial serpent known as Sesh Nath who floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar.] Your eyes are like a lotus flower; the lotus flower itself has emerged from your navel. [This lotus emerged from the navel of reclining Vishnu, and from this lotus was born the creator of the visible world known as Brahma.] The complexion of your body is dark like the rain bearing clouds. You are a treasury of beauty, charm and attractiveness which is equivalent to millions of Kamdeos. [The Kamdeo is the god of passions, and is regarded as being the most charming to look at.] (6).

You are easily accessible for your devotees, but most inaccessible for the rascals, the miscreants and those who are wicked. [Only those with a pure heart can attain the Lord; those whose heart is perverted cannot find him.] In the path of your devotion, one has to face great hurdles (to test one's tenacity and sincerity of devotion). You destroy all the bad or evil qualities and characters of your devotees. [You make them holy and pure.] You are very difficult to attain and most formidable. You can eliminate, remove or dispel great troubles, tribulations and sorrows. You had removed the pride and vanity of Brahma's son Sankadi about his knowledge of the 'Para and Aparā³' (7).

You are always kind and benevolent towards your devotees. You can uproot (remove) the torments, miseries and tribulations caused by this world consisting of a cycle of birth and death. Your name 'Ram' is like a fire for the purpose of burning the cotton of sin. You are like a 'sun' for the purpose of eliminating (removing, overcoming) the night represented by ever changing (unsatisfied) desires. You bear the burden of the earth. You remove the fear of those who have taken your refuge. And you are the abode of mercy and compassion (8).

The various communities of Gods worship and revere your holy feet. You wear a garland of Mandaar flowers on your chest. [Mandaar = the coral tree.] Oh Lord Ram, the enemy of Ravana! I, who am always tormented by the miseries and troubles (of Kaliyug), have taken the refuge and the shelter of your holy feet. Oh Lord! Save and protect me! (9).

[Note—¹The *ten sense organs* are said to be the following—five organs of perception such as the eye which sees, the tongue which tastes, the nose which smells, the ear which hears, and the skin which feels. The five organs of action are the following—the hands which accept, the legs which take the creature to his desired place, the mouth which speaks and eats, the excretory which eliminate waste from the body, and the genitals which help in reproduction and give him pleasure.

²The *five Prans* are the following—Pran (the vital air which sustains life), Apan (the wind which passes through the anus), Samaan (equivalent or balancing force of life), Byan (the vital air which pervades throughout the body and the mind), Udaan (the air which rises up the throat, e.g., belching) respectively.

³*Para and Aparaa Vidya*—References: Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 28-30; Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 1, sections 1, verse no. 4-5.

The word *Paraa Vidya* refers to that knowledge which is transcendental and beyond the normal field of knowledge that can be acquired in this mundane world by study; the knowledge which relates to the supreme 'self' or the pure conscious Atma; the knowledge of things that is beyond the range of bodily perception and comprehension. It is the knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the ultimate and absolute Truth of creation. The *Paraa Vidya* relates to the invisible and unknown Divinity that is eternal, infinite and imperishable, and whose Mantra is OM. [Refer—Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1, verse no. 4-5.]

It has been extensively described in Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1, verse nos. 4-9.

On the other hand, *Aparaa Vidya* means that body of knowledge that is known and which can enlighten the aspirant about the *Paraa Vidya* which is the knowledge of the transcendental Brahm. In this category come the four Vedas—the Rik, the Sam, the Yajur and the Atharva. Refer—Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1, verse no. 4-5.

It has been extensively described in Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse nos. 4-5.]

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देव—

संत—संतापहर, विश्व—विश्रामकर, राम कामारि, अभिरामकारी ।

शुद्ध बोधायतन, सच्चिदानंदघन, सज्जनानंद—वर्धन, खरारी ।।1।।

शील—समता—भवन, विषमता—मति—शमन, राम रामारमन, रावनारी ।
 खड्गकर, चर्मवर—वर्मधर, रुचिर कटि तूण शर—शक्ति सारंगधारी ।।2।।
 सत्यसंधान, निर्वाणप्रद, सर्वहित, सर्वगुण—ज्ञान—विज्ञानशाली ।
 सघन—तम—घोर—संसार—भर—शर्वरी—नाम दिवसेश खर—किरणमाली ।।3।।
 तपन तीच्छन तरुन तीव्र तापघ्न, तपरूप, तनभूप, तमपर, तपस्वी ।
 मान—मद—मदन—मत्सर—मनोरथ—मथन, मोह—अंभोधि—मंदर, मनस्वी ।।4।।
 वेद—विख्यात, वरदेश, वामन, विरज, विमल, वागीश, वैकुण्ठस्वामी ।
 काम—क्रोधादिमर्दन, विवर्धन, छमा—शांति—विग्रह, विहगराज—गामी ।।5।।
 परम पावन, पाप—पुंज—मुंजाटवी—अनलइव निमिष निर्मूलकर्ता ।
 भुवन—भूषण, दूषणारि, भुवनेश, भूनाथ, श्रुतिमाथ जय भुवनभर्ता ।।6।।
 अमल,अविचल,अकल,सकल, संतप्त—कलि—विकलता—भंजनानंदरासी ।
 उरगनायक—शयन, तरुणपंकज—नयन, छीरसागर—अयन, सर्ववासी ।।7।।
 सिद्ध—कवि—कोविदानंद—दायक पदद्वंद्व मंदात्ममनुजैर्दुरापं ।
 यत्र संभूत अतिपूत जल सुरसरी दर्शनादेव अपहरति पापं ।।8।।
 नित्य निर्मुक्त, संयुक्तगुण, निर्गुणानंद, भगवंत, न्यामक, नियंता ।
 विश्व—पोषण—भरण, विश्व—कारण—करण, शरण तुलसीदास त्रास—हंता ।।9।।

Verse no. 55—Oh Lord Ram! You remove the torments and suffering of saints. You give the universe rest in yourself at the time of the ultimate dissolution (or annihilation) of creation at the time of dooms-day. [The entire creation collapses and merges back into you or devolves in you. It had earlier emerged from you, and it retraces its path back to you. It will remain merged in you till the time of the next phase of creation when it will start emerging from you once again.] You provide happiness and joy to Lord Shiva (who is the designated God responsible for conclusion of creation). [That is, Lord Shiva is pleased that you have done the job of winding up the creation for him, and the credit of this stupendous achievement is got by Shiva. So he is pleased that he gets the credit for free!] You are the abode of pure wisdom and truthful knowledge, and are a treasury of eternal bliss and peace. [Pure wisdom and truthful knowledge gives eternal peace and bliss to the enlightened man.] You are the one who enhances the pleasure and happiness of gentlemen, and you are an enemy of the demon Khar. [That is, while pious and righteous people love you, those who are evil and corrupt and cruel treat you as their enemy, and therefore fear you.] (1).

Oh Lord Ram! You are an abode of excellent characters and exemplary qualities such as modesty, propriety, kindness as well as fortitude, equality and equanimity. You are the eliminator of dissension, discord, differences or disputes caused by discrimination and disparity. You are the Lord of Laxmi (the Goddess of wealth and prosperity), and an enemy of Ravana (the demon). You are naturally endowed with the glorious virtue known as 'Shakti' (strength, dynamism, energy, vigour, valour, authority and powers). You (therefore) hold a bow, an arrow, a sword, and an attractive shield in your hands, your body is adorned by an armour, and a quiver is tied around your waist. [These weapons are used by brave warriors, and they are symbols of strength and power.] (2).

You are true to and steadfast in your words. You are a bestower of all auspiciousness and welfare. You are a benevolent benefactor who is favourable to all. You are complete with all the divine qualities, all the knowledge and all the wisdom. Your name of 'Ram' is akin to the powerful rays of the sun for overcoming or eliminating the

darkness of night symbolising ignorance and delusions associated with this mundane and mortal world (3).

Your divine radiance and splendour are brilliant. You destroy the numerous and fierce torments, miseries and sufferings of this world which keep on emerging endlessly one after another. And though you have a body of a human King (who are generally very indulgent), you are an embodiment of Tapa (austerities, self-control, penance etc.). [This refers to the physical form of Lord Ram as the king of Ayodhya. But unlike the kings of this world, he practices exceptional virtues of Tapa and remains aloof from the world of sense objects as well as from the demands of the sense organs for self gratification.] You are beyond ignorance and delusions. You're the one who has exemplary control over one's own self. You are like the legendary Mandrachal mountain for churning the ocean of pride, vanity, hypocrisy, haughtiness, jealousy, envy, anger, lust, passions, desires, delusions etc. [This mountain was used as a turning rod to churn the ocean by the demons and the gods in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity.] You are very wise and thoughtful (4).

You are the Lord of the Gods who are famous in the Vedas and bestow boons. You are Vaaman. [Vaaman was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu in the form of a Brahmin mendicant who was like a dwarf. The word 'Vaaman' means a dwarf. Hence, this stanza means that it was Lord Ram in his primary cosmic form of Lord Vishnu who had revealed himself as Vaaman]. You are an exemplary renouncer and remain detached from everything. You are most pure and holy. You are the Lord of speech as well as the Lord of Vaikunth (heaven, abode of Vishnu). You destroy Kaam (lust, passion, desire), Krodh (indignation, wrath, anger), Lobh (greed, avarice, covetousness) etc. You are the enhancer of the quality of forgiveness, tolerance and fortitude. You are an embodiment of peace and tranquility. You mount on Garuda, the king of birds. [Garud is the mount of Lord Vishnu. Its reference here implies that Lord Ram is Lord Vishnu himself personified.] (5).

You are very pure and are like 'fire' to burn instantly the forest of tall reeds known as 'Munj' representing the treasury of sins. [That is, you are pure and uncorrupt like the 'fire', and you destroy all sins like the fire that destroys huge bundles of reed, burning them to ashes in a short time.] You are the ornament of the universe. [You are the most exalted and adorable Lord in the entire creation. The creation gets its value, importance and meaning because of the fact that you are present in it as its Lord.] You are an enemy of the demon Dushan, Lord of the world (universe) as well as the earth, the head (the essence, the most revered deity) of the Vedas, and the sustainer of the whole universe (creation). Glory to you! (6).

You are most pure, uncorrupt and holy. You are unchangeable as well as changeable. [You are 'unchangeable' because you are the Absolute Truth of creation and the essence of the living world that is known as Consciousness which is a common denominator in the entire creation. You are 'changeable' because this world, which is your own manifestation, is always changing. No two things and no two individuals are alike in this world though it is you who pervades uniformly in them and are their truthful identity.] You are universal and uniform in this creation. [You pervade uniformly throughout this creation.] You are the destroyer of the agitations and agonies of the creatures caused by the scorching (tormenting) effects of Kaliyug, and are the treasury of happiness, joy and bliss (for them). You recline on (the bedstead of) Sesh Nath (the

legendary serpent floating on the surface of the Kshir-sagar). Your eyes are like a blooming lotus flower. You visibly reside in the 'Kshir-sagar' (the legendary celestial ocean of milk), and invisibly in the form of this creation. [Lord Vishnu is 'visualized' by the Purans as reclining on the coiled body of Shesh-nath as the latter floats on the surface of Kshir-sagar. On the other hand, the same Lord has manifested himself as this creation and lives in it as its Atma, its soul, which is 'invisible'. Though the entire visible world is a revelation or a manifestation of the Supreme Being, no one can actually see that Supreme Being with one's physical eyes though he is all-pervading, ubiquitous and omnipresent in this creation.] (7).

These two holy feet of yours, which give happiness and comfort to Siddhas (mystics), Kavis (poets, bards, those who are expert in language and expression) and Vidvans (learned men and wise ones). You are inaccessible to and unattainable by the wicked and rascals. The river Ganges, whose water is most pure and holy, has emerged from your feet, while sins and evils are eliminated by the mere sight of them (8).

You are eternal, free from all delusions, an abode of divine qualities, without the (tainting effects of) three 'Gunas' (Satvik, Rajasic, Tamsik), and an embodiment of bliss, happiness and joys. You are 'Bhagwan' who is endowed with the six celebrated virtues or qualities¹. You are a strict follower of all auspicious rules, regulations and sanctified codes of conduct, and one who reigns over the entire creation. You are the sustainer of the entire universe, as well as the original cause (or the very origin of) the world. Oh Lord, you are the remover of all fears of this refugee Tulsidas (9).

[Note—¹The word Bhagwan has two syllables 'Bhag' and 'Wan'. The second syllable 'Wan' means one who possesses, or is in the possession of. The first syllable 'Bhag' means the following six qualities—(i) Possessing all the qualities that are called Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct). (ii) Possessing all the qualities that are called Yash (good name and fame; renown and majesty; (iii) Possessing all the qualities that are called Aishwarya (glories, good fortunes, supremacy, sway, greatness, majesty, magnificence, grandeur, successes and achievements; (iv) Possessing all the qualities that are called Sri (wealth, prosperity, authority, powers, potentials, proficiencies, successes and achievements; (v) Possessing all the qualities that are called Gyan (the best of all knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment; and (vi) Possessing all the qualities that are called Vairagya (dispassion, detachment, renunciation, leading to freedom from delusions and entanglements).

Hence, Bhagwan is a person who possesses, or is an embodiment of all these six eclectic qualities or virtues.]

(56)

देव—

दनुजसूदन, दयासिंधु, दंभापहन, दहन दुर्दोष, दर्पापहर्ता ।
दुष्टतादमन, दमभवन, दुःखौघहर, दुर्ग दुर्वासना नाशकर्ता ॥१॥
भूरिभूषण, भानुमंत, भगवत, भव—भंजनाभयद, भुवनेश भारी ।

भावनातीत, भववृद्ध, भवभक्तहित, भूमिउद्धरण, भूधरण—धारी ।।2।।
 वरद, वनदाभ, वागीश, विश्वातमा, विरज, वैकुण्ठ—मन्दिर—बिहारी ।
 व्यापक व्योम, वंदारु, वामन, विभो, ब्रह्मविद, ब्रह्म, चिंतापहारी ।।3।।
 सहज सुंदर, सुमुख, सुमन, शुभ सर्वदा, शुद्ध सर्वज्ञ, स्वच्छन्दचारी ।
 सर्वकृत, सर्वभूत, सर्वजित, सर्वहित, सत्य—संकल्प, कल्पांतकारी ।।4।।
 नित्य, निर्मोह, निर्गुण, निरंजन, निजानंद, निर्वाण, निर्वाणदाता ।
 निर्भरानंद, निःकंप, निःसीम, निर्मुक्त, निरुपाधि, निर्मम, विधाता ।।5।।
 महामंगलमूल, मोद—महिमायतन, मुग्ध—मधु—मथन, मानद, अमानी ।
 मदनमर्दन, मदातीत, मायारहित, मंजु मानाथ, पाथोजपानी ।।6।।
 कमल—लोचन, कलाकोश, कोदंडघर, कोशलाधीश, कल्याणरासी ।
 यातुधान प्रचुर मत्तकरि—केसरी, भक्तमन—पुण्य—आरण्यवासी ।।7।।
 अनघ, अद्वैत, अनवद्य, अव्यक्त, अज, अमित, अविकार, आनंदसिंधो ।
 अचल, अनिकेत, अविरल, अनामय, अनारंभ, अंभोदनादहन—बंधो ।।8।।
 दासतुलसी खेदखिन्न, आपन्न इह, शोकसंपन्न, अतिशय सभीतं ।
 प्रणतपालक राम, परम करुणाधाम, पाहि मामुर्विपति, दुर्विनीतं ।।9।।

Verse no. 56—Oh Lord Ram! You are the destroyer of demons (symbolizing evil, perversions, cruelty, unrighteousness and sins of all hues). You are an ocean of mercy and compassion. You are an eliminator or remover of such negative qualities as pretensions, deceit, conceit and falsehood. You turn to ashes (burn) all the wicked and evil deeds that a creature does. You are the remover of haughtiness, false pride, vanity, hypocrisy and arrogance. You are the destroyer of wickedness. You are the best amongst those who have restrained their sense organs and practice exemplary self-control. You are the remover of all sorrows, miseries and agonies of the creature. You are the annihilator of all the evil Vasnaas (desires, lust, perversity, attachments) that are formidable and difficult to overcome (1).

You are decorated (adorned) by a large variety of ornaments, and are endowed with the six divine qualities like Aishwarya etc. (which entitles you to be honoured by the title of a Bhagwan—see verse no. 55/9) which shine like the celestial sun. [The ‘ornaments’ are a metaphors for the countless divine virtues that the Lord possesses. These adorn him and make him as glorious as the splendorous sun.] You provide liberation and deliverance from the bondage of the world, and can grant freedom from all sorts of fear (that torment all living beings in this world). You are the most exalted Lord of the creation. You are beyond comprehension and grasp of the mind and the intellect. You are adored and worshipped by Lord Shiva, and are the well-wisher of the devotees of Lord Shiva. You are the one who provides freedom to the earth (from the torments of the demons representing evil and wickedness), and you are the one who bearers all the mountains. [That is, you are the cosmic force that keeps the earth, with all its colossus and heavy mountains, floating in the void of space without any support; you prevent this earth from collapsing from the weight of the mountains. In metaphoric terms it means that it is Lord Ram who actually bears the burden of the entire creation without openly saying so, because on the face of it, it looks that the burden of the mountains is borne by the earth, whereas the fact is that it is the Lord who bears both the burdens—that of the earth as well as of its colossus mountains!] (2).

Oh bestower of boons! Your body is dark like the rain-bearing cloud. You are the patron Lord of speech (i.e. you are the one who not only enables a creature to say something, but also determine what is said by him). You are the macrocosmic and all-pervading universal Soul of creation. You are without any attachments and entanglements (i.e. you are free from being involved in this creation though you live in it as its Soul). You reside always (at all times) in the temple (abode) called Vaikunth (heaven). [This refers to Lord Ram's primary cosmic form as Lord Vishnu who lives in the heaven known as Vaikunth.] You are all-pervading, all-encompassing, ubiquitous and omnipresent like the sky. You are worshipped by all in this creation (i.e. both by the mortal living beings as well as the immortal Gods). You had taken the form of the dwarf mendicant known as Vaaman. You are all able and all competent. You are an expert in the knowledge of Brahm (the macrocosmic pure 'Self' known as the cosmic Consciousness, the Supreme Being), and are an embodiment or personification of that Brahm. [That is, you are highly enlightened about your true form, and you know that inspite of assuming a human body you are not an ordinary man but the Supreme Being himself revealed in your divine form.] You are the one who removes all the worries and miseries that afflict the world and its creatures (3).

You are naturally and inherently of a sweet nature, and have an attractive countenance (which instills fearlessness and reassurance in the heart of your devotee). You have a pure heart (i.e. you have no deceit and conceit hidden in you). You are eternally and always auspicious, holy and pure. You are all-knowing and omniscient. You are independent and free from having any sort of compulsions of any kind (which may force you to make compromises in connection with your principles and commitments to your devotees). You can do everything in this world (as you are omnipotent and almighty Lord of this creation). You are the one who sustains all, conquers all, and are the benevolent well-wisher of all. You are true to your words and promises (i.e. you are truthful and honest). And you are an annihilator or the concluder of the world (i.e. bring the creation to an end). [This is because you are the Supreme Being, and it is you who decides when to create and when to conclude this world.] (4).

You are eternal and infinite. You are without Moha (any trace of delusions and its attendant attachments, allurements, infatuations and other spiritual anomalies associated with this world). You are formless and attributless. You are most holy, divine and immaculate. You are an embodiment of self-generated bliss. You are both the embodiment as well as the bestower of salvation to the soul. [That is, in your manifested form as Lord Ram you grant emancipation and salvation to the soul of the devotee, but since you are the supreme Soul and the spiritual Truth of this creation it is you who is the ultimate destiny of the individual's soul.] You are a personification of the virtues of complete bliss and happiness, You are unmovable (stable), without limits (infinite), an embodiment (personification) of salvation, and beyond honour (you transcend such mundane considerations as honour and respect). You are free from all attachments or attractions (that are the normal characteristic quality of all in this creation). And it is you who decides the destiny of all (5).

You are the root of all greatest of virtues of auspiciousness and holiness. [The word 'root' means that you are a treasury of these virtues as well as the source from which all such qualities draw their strength just like a tree that draws its nourishment

through the medium of the root. It is you who help these noble virtues remain established in this world just like the root that helps the tree to remain firmly anchored to the ground and prevents its toppling over.] You are an abode of joy, happiness and bliss, as well as of great majesty, magnificence, fame and glory. You are the slayer of the foolish demon Madhu¹. You give respect to others, but have no pride, vanity or ego yourself. You are the destroyer of Kamdeo (i.e. of passions, yearning and lust—because Kamdeo is the patron god of these qualities). You are free from the evil qualities of haughtiness, hypocrisy and delusions. You are the Lord of Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity—i.e. you are Lord Vishnu). And you hold a divine lotus in your hand (6).

Your eyes are like beautiful lotus flower. You are a treasury of the sixty four celebrated qualities known as 'Kalaa'². You hold a bow (in your hand), are the Lord (king) of Kaushal (Ayodhya), and a treasury of auspiciousness. You are like a lion for the purpose of killing numerous demons in the form of wild, haughty and mad elephants. [The 'demons' here are symbols of negative traits such as evil, cruelty, haughtiness, arrogance etc. So just like a lion is easily able to overcome and kill a wild elephant that is bigger in physical size and strength than a lion, you too can easily overcome and eliminate all the formidable and evil forces in creation which are like demons.] You reside in the pure heart of your devotees which is like forest where this lion lives (7).

You are without sins, evils or vices of any kind (i.e. you are perfect and immaculate). You are peerless and without a second. You are faultless and without a taint. You are invisible and imperceptible by the sense organs. You are without birth (i.e. you are unborn because you have no beginning as you are eternal and infinite). You are infinite, eternal and limitless. You are flawless and taintless. You are an ocean of happiness and bliss (i.e. you are an infinite source of these virtues). You are unmoving (unwavering, stable), yet you do not reside at only one place—for you are present everywhere as you are omnipresent and all-pervading. You are complete in all respects. You are without disease or any ills (i.e. without the spiritual faults caused by worldly delusions that cause immense torment for the living being just like a disease that also torments him). You are without an end or beginning (as you are infinite, eternal and non-perishable). You are the elder brother of Laxman who is the slayer of Meghnad (who was the son of Ravana, the 10-headed demon king of Lanka) (8).

This Tulsidas is being tormented by the countless miseries and tribulations inflicted upon him by this world; he is surrounded by them; he is overcome by uncountable sorrows and agonies; and has become very distraught and extremely frightened. Oh the care-taker and sustainer of refugees! Oh the abode of the highest quality of mercy and compassion! Oh Lord Ram, the Lord of the earth! Please protect this evil, miserable, wretched and afflicted one (Tulsidas). [These words show Tulsidas' great humility and modesty, his total surrender before the Lord, his earnestness in seeking the Lord's intervention for redemption of his soul from the miseries created by the world, and his realisation that Lord Ram is the personified form of the Supreme Being.] (9).

[Note—¹The demon *Madhu*— The Vedas had been stolen by two demons named Madhu and Kaitav, who hid them in the eastern ocean. Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of Hayagriva to kill them and restore the Vedas.

²The 16 *Kalaas* are the following virtues—These are the special qualities and attributes etc. that one must possess to make him perfect. They represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number

corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since Lord Ram is a manifestation of the 'Viraat Purush', the vast and all-encompassing cosmic form of the Supreme Being, these sixteen qualities or attributes refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful. Hence, these sixteen Kalaas represent all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Lord Ram is the creature's only sincere well-wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and he is the Lord who possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word 'Kalaa' that enables him to carry out his duties of sustaining and protecting this creation.

Since the entire creation is a manifestation of the Lord, and the Lord is himself an embodiment of all that exists in this creation, it follows that all the fundamental elements that constitute this creation are represented in the form of Lord Ram.

The sixteen Kalaas are expressly listed in the *Prashna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 4. These are the following—(i) Pran (life; life consciousness; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life manifested in the form of the vital winds; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (ii) Shraddha (the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self; the sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause) (xiii) Mantra (the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the different mystical formulas consisting of letters or words or phrases which encapsulated various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent cosmic energy, strength and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large), (xiv) Karma (the ability to do deeds and take action; the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks), (xv) Loka (the various worlds, such as the mortal world where the creature lived on the earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead creatures would live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the Supreme Being lives; the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the

consciousness), and (xvi) Naam (the name assigned to each independent creature; the good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory that a creature has in this world).

They are also called the *sixteen Aakarshini Shaktis* of creation that makes the possessor of these virtues much sought after in society. The word 'Aakarshini' means one that attracts others, and the word 'Shakti' of course means power. These are the following—(i) the power possessed by Pran, the vital life-sustaining winds or airs which maintain the vibrations, the rhythm and the essential functions of life in this creation; (ii) the power that comes with having Shraddha, i.e. having the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect and devotion that one has for his chosen deity, for the Supreme Being, and for the aim of life one has set for himself; (iii) the power to be as vast, all-pervading and all-encompassing as the Sky element known as 'Akash'; (iv) the power that is equivalent to that possessed by the Wind or Air element known as 'Vayu' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of air; (v) the power that is known as 'Tej', literally meaning vigour, vitality, energy, dynamism etc. that are depicted by the Fire element known as 'Agni' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of heat and warmth; (vi) the powers equivalent to those possessed by the Water element known as 'Apaha' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of water; (vii) the powers that are equivalent to the earth element known as 'Prithivi' which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation, the power that helps one to sustain others and therefore it makes a person much sought after; (viii) the powers displayed by the various sense organs of the body, called the 'Indriya', because it is these organs that enable the creature to achieve stupendous and most astounding tasks that are even beyond imagination; (ix) the immense and most lauded power of the mind and sub-conscious known as the 'Mana' which has formidable potentials and reach, keeping the creature firmly held in its grip, and without which power nothing can be done or any success achieved in any field whatsoever; (x) the power equivalent to that possessed by food or 'Anna' which is absolutely essential for survival and has such powerful force of attraction that people go long distances in search of food, even kill each other over it; (xi) the magnificent power to create and generate that is shown by the semen known as the 'Virya' which stands for courage, valour, potency, vitality and strength, vigour, dynamism etc., and anyone who possesses these glorious powers or virtues is surely much attractive and useful for others; (xii) the power that comes with doing 'Tapa', meaning austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance, carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self, sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause, etc., virtues that make the person who possesses them have a magnetic appeal for others; (xiii) the powers inherent in the various mystical 'Mantras' which are great spiritual formulas with astounding potentials to fulfill all desires of the user; they are like keys to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the mystical powers that are an integral part of the

Mantra and represent the various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent cosmic energy, the strength, the dynamism and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large; (xiv) the power to do various deeds and take actions, the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks, the powers that are an integral part of the theory of doing Karma; (xv) the powers that makes a man so powerful that he can have control over the various worlds called the three Lokas, i.e. the mortal world where the creatures live on earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead ancestors live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the senior Gods live; it also refers to the terrestrial world, the heavens and the nether world, as well as the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness; and finally (xvi) the inherent power in one's good name, the power of 'Naam'; this gives the person fame, acclaim, authority and respect in society; it bestows reputation, honour and glory that a person so much seeks in this world. This power of good name and its value in terms of making the man famous and eternal in the memory of others is so attractive that everyone wishes to gain some good name for himself in this world. A person with good name attracts others towards himself.]

Glory and Importance of Ram's Name: Raag Bhairav

(65)

राम राम रमु, राम राम रटु, राम राम जपु जीहा ।
 रामनाम—नवनेह—मेहको, मन! हठि होहि पपीहा ॥1॥
 सब साधन—फल कूप—सरित—सर, सागर—सलिल—निरासा ।
 राम—नाम—रति—स्वाति—सुधा—सुभ सीकर प्रेमपियासा ॥2॥
 गरजि, तरजि, पाषान बरषि पवि, प्रीति परखि जिय जानै ।
 अधिक अधिक अनुराग उमँग उर, पर परमिति पहिचानै ॥3॥
 रामनाम—गति, रामनाम—मति, रामनाम—अनुरागी ।
 है गये हैं, जे होहिंगे, तेइ त्रिभुवन गनियत बड़भागी ॥4॥
 एक अंग मग अगमु गवन कर, बिलमु न छिन छिन छाहैं ।
 तुलसी हित अपनो अपनी दिसि, निरुपधि नेम निबाहैं ॥5॥

Verse no. 65—Oh Tongue! You should be always engrossed (involved) in (matters relating to) Ram, chant 'Ram' and repeat (the holy Mantra of) Ram constantly. Oh Mind! Be like a Papiha (the sparrow hawk), and be enamoured of the cloud in the form of devotion and affection for Ram's holy name (i.e. think of nothing else except Ram's name) [This bird is renowned for its undiluted love for the rain-bearing cloud, and it drinks only the rain drops as they fall from the sky. Otherwise it prefers to remain thirsty. So Tulsidas cites it as an example of his own desire to develop devotion, affection and love for the Lord with the same intensity and sincerity as that of the Papiha.] (1).

Even as a Papiha shuns the water of wells, rivers, ponds and even an ocean, and remains thirsty for a single drop of love-like rain of the Swati Nakshatra (a special configuration of stars occurring between August-September), so should you (the tongue) also avoid the hope of satisfying yourself by any other mean except by concentrating exclusively (solely) on the nectar-like drops symbolized by constant repetition of Lord Ram's holy Name (2).

The lover cloud growls, admonishes, showers hail and strikes the loving Papiha with a thunderbolt. In this way, when the cloud determines that the unshakeable, eternal and measureless love of the Papiha, even after subjecting it to the most rigorous of tests, goes on increasing steadily with each test, then only does it provide it (the Papiha) with the much sought after rain drops (of the Swati Nakshatra) (3).

In a similar fashion (no matter what tribulations, torments, agonies, troubles come to test your sincerity and steadfastness), by the grace of God and with a steadfast mind, you should also take the refuge of Lord Ram's nectar-like holy Name, keep the intellect hooked to Ram's divine Name, and become a lover of Lord Ram's loving and endearing Name. Such devotees who depend on Lord Ram's Name, whether in the past, the present or the future, should be considered as most lucky and fortunate in the entire world having three dimensions. [The three dimensions are the past, the present and the future. It also means the terrestrial world, the celestial world and the nether world, as well as the present world, the world after death, and the world obtained upon new birth.] (4).

This path (of having unflinching, unwavering and sincere love for Lord Ram's name) is lonely and very difficult; once you step on this path, do not stop (even momentarily) to take rest under a shade (i.e. enjoy the pleasures of the objects of this materialistic and illusionary world). Oh Tulsidas! Your welfare lies in keeping your allegiance to the holy and divine Name of Lord Ram without having any deceit, crookedness, cunning, trickery and deception in your mind. [That is, your welfare is ensured only if you have sincere devotion for Lord Ram's Name.] (5).

(66)

राम जपु, राम जपु, राम जपु बावरे।
 घोर भव-नीर-निधि नाम निज नाव रे॥1॥
 एक ही साधन सब रिद्धि-सिद्धि साधि रे।
 ग्रसे कलि-रोग जोग-संजम-समाधि रे॥2॥
 भलो जो है, पोच जो है, दाहिनो जो, बाम रे।
 राम-नाम ही सों अंत सब ही को काम रे॥3॥
 जग नभ-बाटिका रही है फलि फूलि रे।
 धुवाँ कैसे धौरहर देखि तू न भूलि रे॥4॥
 राम-नाम छाड़ि जो भरोसो करै और रे।
 तुलसी परोसो त्यागि माँगै कूर कौर रे॥5॥

Verse no. 66—[Note :- The use of the Hindi word 'Re' as in *ray* { 'रे' } at the end of each sentence indicates earnest and sincere plea by the loving teacher to convince a rather

naughty, wayward and reluctant disciple to mend his ways, and pay heed to what is being said, lest he would repent later.]

Oh you fool! Chant Ram's holy Name, I repeat—do it; for it is the only boat we have to ferry us across this worldly ocean (i.e. this is the easiest way to achieve salvation as it is easily available, simplest and accessible to all) (1).

You can master all virtues and knowledge with the help of this medium alone because Yoga (meditation and contemplation), self-control and self-restraint) and Samadhi (a state of meditative trance) etc. have been all eclipsed by the era of Kali (i.e. all other mediums for salvation or liberation of the soul have been over-shadowed or obscured by the evil presence of Kali, and therefore they aren't available). So, rely on his holy Name for your emancipation and salvation because it is still available (2).

In the end, it (the holy Name of Ram) is the only hope for redemption for all of us whether it is bad or good, upside down or up (i.e. whether chanted backwards or forwards, willingly or unwillingly, with or without faith, conviction and belief—it will only do you good, rest assured about it) (3).

This world is like an illusion of a blossoming garden in the sky—it is a mirage, it is a delusion, it is something that is totally fake. All the materials and sense objects in this world are castles and palaces of smoke—here now and gone the next moment (i.e. don't go astray believing the world to be real—it is a total illusion, a mirage. So, focus your attention on the supreme reality) (4).

Tulsidas says that one who relies and depends on others, and not on the holy Name of Lord Ram, is like a fool who leaves the food in front of him and begs for it from house to house like a dog. [That is, the medium of emancipation and salvation is in front of you—so why do you search for it somewhere else?] (5).

(67)

राम राम जपु जिय सदा सानुराग रे।
 कलि न बिराग, जोग, जाग, तप, त्याग रे॥१॥
 राम सुमिरत सब बिधि हीको राज रे।
 रामको बिसारिबो निषेध—सिरताज रे॥२॥
 राम—नाम महामनि, फनि जगजाल रे।
 मनि लिये फनि जियै, ब्याकुल बिहाल रे॥३॥
 राम—नाम कामतरु देत फल चारि रे।
 कहत पुरान, बेद, पंडित, पुरारि रे॥४॥
 राम—नाम प्रेम—परमारथको सार रे।
 राम—नाम तुलसीको जीवन—अधार रे॥५॥

Verse no. 67—[Note :- As if Tulsidas' plea to chant Lord Ram's holy Name could not fully convince his audience, in this verse he continues the argument further, and concludes citing the Vedas and the Purans as his authority.]

Oh creature! Repeat (chant) Lord Ram's holy Name with abiding and sincere love and devotion, for besides Lord Ram's Name, nothing (e.g. emancipation, salvation, bliss, tranquility) can be achieved in this era of Kaliyug merely by having Vairagya (renunciation), or by doing Yoga (meditation), Yagya (fire sacrifices and other religious practices), Tapa (austerities and penances), and Daan (making charities and giving of alms) (1).

In the scriptures, clear instructions are laid down as to what should or should not be done (i.e. what constitutes Dharma and Adharma, good deeds and evil/bad deeds). But in my (Tulsidas') view, remembering Lord Ram's holy Name is the king among laws, and forgetting him (his Name) is the worst form of evil deed (2).

This world is like a serpent and Ram's holy Name is like a Mani (a luminous sac on the hood of a serpent which glows in the darkness). Even as the snake dies when one takes away this Mani from it, so does the sorrowful, entangling web consisting of this world vanishes (or dies) on taking Lord Ram's holy Name (3).

Oh! This holy Name of Lord Ram is a Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree) which gives the celebrated four fruits of 'Artha' (prosperity and wealth), 'Dharma' (righteousness), 'Kaam' (fulfillment of desires) and 'Moksha' (liberation and final deliverance; emancipation and salvation). This fact is endorsed and ratified by the Vedas, the Purans, the Pandit (wise and expert teachers of spiritual laws), and Lord Shiva (4).

Lord Ram's holy Name is the essence of both devotion and salvation of the soul, and it is the very foundation of Tulsidas' life (5).

(68)

राम राम राम जीह जौलौ तू न जपिहै।
 तौलौ, तू कहूँ जाय, तिहूँ ताप तपिहै॥1॥
 सुरसरि-तीर बिनु नीर दुख पाइहै।
 सुरतरु तरे तोहि दारिद सताइहै॥2॥
 जागत, बागत, सपने न सुख सोइहै।
 जनम जनम, जुग जुग जग रोइहै॥3॥
 छूटिबेके जतन बिसेष बाँधो जायगो।
 हैहै बिष भोजन जो सुधा-सानि खायगो॥4॥
 तुलसी तिलोक, तिहूँ काल तोसे दीनको।
 रामनाम ही की गति जैसे जल मीनको॥5॥

Verse no. 68—[Note :- Tulsidas warns in this verse what kind of fate awaits us if we do not heed him].

Admonishing the creature, Tulsidas warns—'Oh, listen! Unless you chant Ram's holy Name, you can never find peace anywhere—and will continue to burn with the fire of the Traitap. [The Traitap is the torment that a creature is subjected to because of the following three—(i) Adhyatmik—spiritual problems; (ii) Adhibhautik—problems arising due to existential life in this world; and (iii) Adhidaivik—problems arising due to malignant stars and gods.] (1).

You will be thirsty even while being on the banks of the holy river Ganges, and poverty shall torment you even while you are staying under the Kalpa Tree (2).

You would never get peace—waking, sleeping or dreaming. You would have to weep (lament, regret) in this world in all your births, always, and in all the eras (3).

The more you try other methods for liberation and deliverance, the greater will be your entanglement in this world (because you are far away from Ram's holy Name). Even the Amrit (which is the delicious drink that gives immortality) would turn poison for you (4).

Tulsidas says about himself that for a humble person like him, in all the three Lokas (subterranean, terrestrial, celestial) and all the three periods (past, present, future), Ram's holy Name has the same importance as the water has for a fish. [Even as a fish cannot survive without water, Tulsidas can't live without Ram's Name.] (5).

(69)

सुमिरु सनेहसों तू नाम रामरायको ।
 संबल निसंबलको, सखा असहायको ।।1।।
 भाग है अभागेहूको, गुन गुनहीनको ।
 गाहक गरीबको, दयालु दानि दीनको ।।2।।
 कुल अकुलीनको, सुन्यो है बेद साखि है ।
 पांगुरेको हाथ—पाँय, आँधरेको आँखि है ।।3।।
 माय—बाप भूखेको, आधार निराधारको ।
 सेतु भव—सागरको, हेतु सुखसारको ।।4।।
 पतितपावन राम—नाम सो न दूसरो ।
 सुमिरि सुभूमि भयो तुलसी सो ऊसरो ।।5।।

Verse no. 69—[Note :- After explaining the importance and value of Ram's holy and divine Name in earlier verses, here Tulsidas emphasises its utility for all creatures in this world, citing the pair of opposites to illustrate his point].

‘Oh creature, listen! You chant Ram's holy Name with love and devotion as his name is like pocket (traveling) expenses for penniless travellers, and like a personal assistant to the helpless (1).

This Ram's Name is the luck of luck-less, and the talent of an idiot (or those who have no special qualities or skills). [That is, those who chant Lord Ram's holy Name are bestowed with good luck and wisdom.] It is like a merchant who respects the poor (customer), and is merciful towards the downtrodden and the distressed. [Such a merchant is respected in the society as compared to one who is selfish.] (2).

This Lord's Name is like a higher caste for those born in the low caste. [That is, even a low-caste-born is to be considered a high-caste-born if he chants the holy Name of Lord Ram.] Lord Ram's holy Name is akin to the limbs of a lame, and eyes for the blind—this law is endorsed by the Vedas (i.e. it is irrefutable and true) (3).

This holy Name of Lord Ram is like a parent for the hungry (for a hungry man is sure to find food in the house of his parents), and help for the helpless. It is like a bridge

to cross-over this ocean-like mundane world of formidable problems and miseries. [That is, to cross-over from the mortal world to immortality, and break free from the shackles of this world and provide liberation to the soul, the holy Name of Lord Ram is like a bridge.] The Name is the cause of eternal bliss for the creature and his soul (4).

What is more benign and beneficent than Ram's holy Name, the mere remembrance of which has turned the useless Tulsidas who was as worthless as a dry and barren moor into a fertile land sought after by all. [That is, the worthless Tulsidas has become so venerated and sought after when he had taken the shelter of Lord Ram's holy Name.] (5).

(70)

भलो भली भाँति है जो मेरे कहे लागिहै।
 मन राम-नामसों सुभाय अनुरागिहै॥1॥
 राम-नामको प्रभाउ जानि जूझी आगिहै।
 सहित सहाय कलिकाल भीरु भागिहै॥2॥
 राम-नामसों बिराग, जोग, जप जागिहै।
 बाम बिधि भाल हू न करम दाग दागिहै॥3॥
 राम-नाम मोदक सनेह सुधा पागिहै।
 पाइ परितोष तू न द्वार द्वार बागिहै॥4॥
 राम-नाम काम-तरु जोइ जोइ माँगिहै।
 तुलसीदास स्वारथ परमारथ न खाँगिहै॥5॥

Verse no. 70—[Note :- After pleading with his disciple to chant Ram's holy Name repeatedly, warning for the consequences of not doing so, pleading again citing opposite circumstances which are benefited by Lord's Name, Tulsidas finally and lovingly requests his disciple to chant the Name, and obtain the benefits that he will reap from it.]

‘Oh my dear! If you pay heed to me and follow what I say (i.e. chant with full devotion and love the holy Name of Lord Ram), you would benefit and set to gain in all possible ways. (I'm telling this for your own good) (1).

Lord Ram's holy Name is like a fire which removes the shiver of extreme cold. Kaliyug—which can deflect one's wisdom from the path of good—runs away out of fear on hearing this Name (2).

Vairagya (renunciation), Yoga (meditation), and Tapa (austerity and penance) etc. would become effective and powerful by merely chanting or repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram. Even a jealous and malignant Brahma (the creator who writes destiny) would not be able to blame you for your evil deeds (i.e. all the accumulated results of your past bad deeds will be eliminated forthwith as soon as you start repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram) (3).

If you eat s ‘Laddu’ (a ball-shaped sweet made of gram flour) made of Ram's holy Name which is soaked in the Amrit (a divine and sweet liquid that gives immortality; here meaning ‘honey’) of love and devotion, you shall get highest satisfaction for ever. Say, then you wouldn't have to wonder from house-to-house in search of peace. [‘House

to house is a phrase meaning from one place to another, or from one source to another seeking peace, happiness, bliss and rest for the soul.] (4).

Oh Tulsidas (addressing himself)! Ram's holy Name is like a Kalpa Tree. You will get whatever you ask of it, you will not be left wanting. [That is, the holy Name of the Lord will fulfill all your wants, both the ones pertaining to this world as well as the ones pertaining to the requirements of your soul—i.e. its need for emancipation and salvation, for peace and tranquility, for bliss and happiness.] (5).

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SECTION 3

Hymns of Lord Ram

In this Section no. 3 we shall read some of the eclectic divine Mantras or hymns of Lord Ram from a variety of sources.

So, in Part 1 we shall read the Mantras of the Lord as they are mentioned in the 'Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition. These Mantras appear in Canto 5 of this Upanishad.

In Part 2 we shall read the 108 Mantras dedicated to Lord Ram as they appear in the Padma Puran.

And in Part 3 we will be reading the Mantras from other sources which are in Sanskrit and attributed to many acclaimed devotees of Lord Ram.

Section-3/Part-1

The hymns of Lord Ram from the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 4. There are a total of 47 verses in this hymn. This Upanishad belongs to the Atharva Veda tradition.

१. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् द्वैतपरमानन्दात्मा, यः परं ब्रह्म भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/1. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is 'Advaitya'—i.e. he is non-dual, without a parallel, is peerless and unique.

He is the 'Atma' (or soul; the pure consciousness) that is an embodiment or a fount of 'Param Anand'—i.e. he is the personified form of the eternal and ethereal cosmic Consciousness that is an image of supreme, pure and absolute bliss, beatitude and felicity.

He is the most majestic, exalted, sublime and supreme transcendental Brahm personified. The three Lokas called Bhu (भू), Bhuvaha (भुवः) and Swaha (स्वः)¹ are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/1).

[Note—¹These three letters are the primary words pronounced by the creator Brahma at the time of creation, and from them evolved or emerged the three worlds—i.e. the terrestrial, the sky or the world above the earth, and the heaven.]

२. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्चाऽखण्डैकरसात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/2. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is the supreme Atma or Soul (the pure cosmic Consciousness) which is eternal, uniform, universal, indivisible and immutable; it is a single entity that cannot be partitioned, fractioned and fractured in any way whatsoever. It is one unified whole.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/2).

३. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च ब्रह्मानन्दामृतं भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/3. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is a personified form of the Amrit (the ambrosia or elixir) of supreme and undiluted Anand (bliss, happiness, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) that is associated with Brahm and Brahm-realisation.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/3).

४. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यस्तारकं ब्रह्म भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/4. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is the Tarak Brahm—i.e. he is the supreme Lord who can provide the creature with liberation and deliverance from this world and its never ending miseries and the cycle of birth and death. He is the supreme Lord who can provide the soul of the creature with emancipation and salvation.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/4).

५. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च ब्रह्मा विष्णुरीश्वरो यः सर्वदेवात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/5. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is the one who has revealed himself as the Trinity Gods known as Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Shiva (the concluder). [This is obviously true as these three Gods of the Trinity represent the Supreme Being performing three functions of creation, and Lord Ram is that Supreme Being.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/5).

६. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये सर्वे वेदाः साङ्गाः सशाखाः सपुराणा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/6. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

All the Vedas, their branches, all the Purans and other scriptures are nothing but the Lord revealed in their forms.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/6).

७. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यो जीवात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/7. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is the Lord who has revealed himself as the Jivatma or the living being. [The word 'Jivatma or Jiva Atma' refers to the living being. Jivatma is the cosmic consciousness that comes to live in a gross body, or assumes a form of a gross body. Since this gross body harbours the Atma or the pure cosmic consciousness inside it, it begins to show all the signs of life and vitality, hence called a 'Jiva'—i.e. a living being. The otherwise inane and lifeless gross body has now become alive and active because of the presence of the Atma inside it, thereby giving it the unique honour of being a 'Jiva Atma'. Since the Atma is an universal and unchanging entity that is Advaitya or non-dual by nature, and it is another name for the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has manifested as Lord Ram, it follows that the Jiva Atma is also the Lord in this form.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/7).

८. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/8. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

He is the Lord who resides in the bosom of all living beings as their Atma, the pure conscious soul, the cosmic Consciousness that resides in the subtle heart or the inner-self as the 'true identity or the true self' of the creature.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/8).

९. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये देवाऽसुरमनुष्यादिभावा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/9. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

All the Gods, the non-Gods called the Asurs, and the Humans—indeed, all of them are the same Lord Ram (or the supreme Brahm) revealed in their forms.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/9).

१०. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये मत्स्यकूर्मद्विताराः भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/10. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram (in his cosmic form as Vishnu) who had revealed himself as incarnations of Lord Matsya¹ (the Fish incarnation of Vishnu) and Kurma² (the Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu).

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/10).

[Note—¹*Matsya Avtaar* or the Fish incarnation of Lord Vishnu—In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah's Arc.

²*Kurma Avtaar* or the Tortoise incarnation of Lord Vishnu—Kurma or Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu—It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.]

११. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च प्राणो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/11. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the ‘Pran’ or the vital life sustaining forces of creation. [The word ‘Pran’ literally means ‘life and consciousness’. The word is used to mean the vital winds in conventional terms of Yoga and Upanishads because the vital winds are said to regulate all the functions of the creature’s body. No living being can survive without the presence of air in this world.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/11).

१२. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् योऽन्तःकरणचतुष्टयात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/12. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahman)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahman (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahman) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the four aspects of the inner-self of all living beings, called the ‘Antahakaran Chatusthaaye’. [The ‘Anthakaran’ is the inner self of the creature. It forms his subtle body. It has the following four components—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the faculty of concentration, paying attention and memory; knowledge and sub-conscious), Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) and their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body). That is, the basic nature of a person and the way he would react to a given circumstance, the way he would deal, behave and interact with the world, the way he would interpret things, the way he thinks, the things that would appeal to him and the things he would abhor, etc.—that is, the overall personality of the creature, all depends upon the mental setup tinged with the fundamental character traits that are firmly ingrained in him.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/12).

१३. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च यमो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/13. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahman)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahman (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahman) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the ‘Yam’. [The word ‘Yam’ has three connotations—(i) Yam is the God of death¹, and hence Lord Ram is the one who brings

about the conclusion of creation in the form of Yam. (ii) Yam is the God of Dharma—the deity who is responsible for implementation of the tenets of Dharma, or the eclectic principles of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility in thought and conduct. Hence, Lord Ram ensures that the tenets of Dharma are upheld in this creation. (iii) Yam also means self restraint and control over the sense organs. Hence, Lord Ram exemplifies these grand virtues of creation.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/13).

१४. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्चान्तको भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/14. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

Lord Ram is the one who concludes this creation or brings it to an end, and is the only one who lasts even after the creation is concluded. [In other words, (i) Lord Ram is Lord Shiva personified, or Lord Shiva is none but Lord Ram in his role as the concluder of creation, and (ii) Lord Ram is the cosmic Consciousness or the supreme Brahm who is the only entity that survives the conclusion of creation, and from whom the next phase of creation starts. This is because Lord Ram as Brahm is infinite, eternal and imperishable cosmic Consciousness.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/14).

१५. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च मृत्युर्भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/15. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the Mrityu or death. [In other words, the God of Death is a form that Lord Ram takes to bring about the conclusion of creation. That is why it has been said in the scriptures that a wise and enlightened man does not fear from death as he has developed a sufficiently holistic view of life in which he sees the Lord everywhere in every phase of creation—he sees his Lord equally in life as well as in death.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/15).

१६. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्चामृतं भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/16. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahman)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahman (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahman) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'Amrit' or the ambrosia or elixir of life. He is the nectar of life, the vital force of life, the essence of life, the eternal source of life.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/16).

१७. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यानि पञ्चमहाभूतानि भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/17. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahman)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahman (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahman) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'Panch Maha-Bhuts', or the five principal elements of creation. [In other words, the five elements that constitute the basic backbone of creation have their value and importance because they are one of the many forms of the Supreme Being known as Ram. Or, Lord Ram has assumed five forms called the 'Panch Bhuts' in order to carry out different functions of this creation. The Panch Maha-bhuts are the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or elixir of life, and earth upon which the entire edifice of creation rests. The difference between 'Five Bhuts' and 'Five Maha Bhuts' is that the former refers to the above five elements at the microcosmic level of creation dealing with the individual creature, while the latter term is applied to the same elements when they are considered in their macrocosmic form.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/17).

१८. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यः स्थावरजङ्गमात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/18. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the entire creation—both in its immobile form as well as in its mobile form. [The word 'Sthaawar' refers to something that does not move or show apparent signs of life—such as members of the plant kingdom and rocks, mountains etc., while the word 'Jangam' means those who are mobile and exhibit clear signs of life—such as the members of the animal kingdom. In other words, every single unit of creation is a form of the supreme Brahm who is known by another name as Ram.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/18).

१९. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये पञ्चाग्नयो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/19. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'Panch Agnis'¹, the five divine forms of the sacred fire.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/19).

[Note—¹The five divine fires are the following—Garhyapatya' (गार्हपत्य—the fire of the household hearth), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (दक्षिणाग्नि—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) 'Ahavaniya' (आहवनीय—the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (सभ्य—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (आवसथ्य—the fire of the later Smriti period).]

२०. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यः सत्पव्याहतयो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/20. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'Sapta-Vyarihitis'¹, the five divine forms of subtle life. [The Vyarihitis were the first esoteric words uttered by Brahma, the creator, at the time of creation, and each of them metamorphosed as a world of its own.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/20).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the primary root words pronounced by the creator Brahma at the time of the beginning of creation and from which formed the nucleus around which the seven worlds formed. In other words, the rest of the creation was revealed from these primary sounds created by Brahma.

The seven 'Vyahritis' are the words—(1) Bhu, (2) Bhuvaha, (3) Swaha, (4) Maha, (5) Janaha, (6) Tapaha, and (7) Satyam. 'Bhu' was the nucleus for earth, 'Bhuvaha' for the sky above the earth, 'Swaha' for the space beyond the earth's atmosphere and is generally meant for the heavens, 'Maha' stands for the greater heavens beyond the solar system, called the Maha-Loka where enlightened sages and seers are supposed to dwell (as opposed to earth where ordinary creatures including subterranean creatures would finally take up residence), 'Tapaha' was the place where exalted ascetics would do penances and austerities, and 'Satyam' was the truthful and ultimate abode where the ultimate and irrefutable supreme truthful entity which is the only Authority in creation resides.]

२१. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् या विद्या भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/21. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as glorious virtue known as 'Vidya'—i.e. knowledge in all its forms. [Knowledge is the most important component of creation as even the basic functions of life depend upon knowledge.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/21).

२२. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् या सरस्वती भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/22. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Saraswati'¹, the Goddess of knowledge, erudition, sagacity, skills and wisdom as well as the faculty of speech. [In other words, the sublime and grand virtues that are represented by this goddess are nothing but one of the numerous majestic and eclectic virtues of Lord Ram revealed in that divine form.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/22).

[Note—¹*Saraswati*—This is the Goddess who personifies the virtues of learning, wisdom, erudition, knowledge, expertise and skills of all kinds as well as all kinds of arts, crafts and sciences and all other bodies of knowledge that exist in this creation. Here it means that whatever knowledge that exists in this creation is a revelation of Lord Ram. The Lord is a personified form of all knowledge.]

२३. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् या लक्ष्मी भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/23. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Laxmi'¹, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. [In other words, it is Lord Ram in his cosmic role as the sustainer of creation assumed the form of goddess known as Laxmi so that he can provide the creature with material comfort and pleasures of life so that the creature is not put to undue inconvenience.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/23).

[Note—¹*Laxmi* is the Goddess of well being, majesty, wealth and prosperity. She is the divine consort of Lord Vishnu and represents the dynamism of the Lord that helps him to carry out the function of sustenance, development, growth, nourishment and protection of this vast and myriad creation.]

२४. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् या गौरी भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/24. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Gauri', the Goddess who is the divine consort of Lord Shiva and considered as the Mother Goddess. [The Goddess Gauri is also known as Parvati who is regarded as the Mother of all other forms of goddesses. She is a personified form of Shakti, the cosmic dynamic powers and energy of the supreme Brahm by which the latter does anything. This Shakti is not different or separate from Brahm but only a manifestation of the latter's cosmic dynamism, energy and powers. Since Lord Ram is none else but Brahm personified, it is said here that all the dynamisms and energies that are present in this creation, and all the Goddesses who are personifications of these grand virtues of Brahm, are actually the Lord himself playing out these roles in a secret form.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/24).

२५. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् या जानकी भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/25. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Janki', the daughter of King Janak and his divine consort. [Janki is also known as Sita. She is an incarnation of Goddess Laxmi or Rama who is the divine consort of Lord Vishnu and a manifestation of Shakti in its macrocosmic form.]¹

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/25).

[Note—¹*Sita* is the cosmic primordial primary energy and power called 'Shakti', which was responsible for setting in motion the process of creation, personified. She is the divine consort of Lord Ram who is none other than Lord Vishnu in a human form.]

२६. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च त्रैलोक्यं भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/26. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the three legendary worlds, and hence is called the 'Trilokya'. [The word 'Trilokyam' has two connotations—one is that the Lord is able to see everything in all the three worlds, that nothing is hidden or secret from him because he is omniscient and all-knowing as well as a resident in the inner-self of all the creatures as their Atma or soul, and two, that all the three worlds are his revelation, or that all the three phases of creation—viz. the past, the present and the future—are uniformly pervaded by the Lord who is the omnipresent and all-encompassing Supreme Being of creation. The three worlds are the terrestrial world, the lower heaven represented by the sky just above the surface of the earth, and the upper heavens represented by the deep recesses of the sky.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/26).

२७. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च सूर्यो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/27. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Surya'¹, the Sun God in his subtle manifestation, and as the visible celestial Sun in his more visible form.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/27).

[Note—¹The Sun/*Surya*—The Sanskrit word for the Sun God or Aditya is *Surya*. This word has three connotations—viz. (i) Sarteha—one how moves. This refers to the Sun because it moves constantly moves across the sky. It also refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness that makes all movement possible. (ii) Sviryate—this means one who receives and accepts. This virtue refers to the fact that all offerings offered to the fire sacrifice are done in the presence of the Sun, and since the latter is the celestial cauldron of fire all the offerings are deemed to be offered to it. In another plane, it refers to the Jiva, the living being, who receives

stimuli from the world and then accepts them and deduces that the world from where they originate is real and true. (iii) Suvateha—meaning one who shines. This is very obvious in the case of the Sun. This virtue refers to the supreme Self or supreme Consciousness that is self-illuminated and self-effulgent.

The Sun is the brightest, the most splendorous, the brilliantly radiant, the most majestic and grandest entity in the entire firmament. The whole length and breadth of the sky is lit with its light; all the objects present in the sky, visible or invisible, are illuminated by its light. It is the eternal and infinite celestial source of light, heat and energy; it inspires, fosters, sustains and protects life in this world; it is synonymous with and a metaphor for life in all its dimensions. Its splendour and radiance makes it an apt metaphor for knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment. As an embodiment of this virtue of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and sagacity he has been held in high esteem and as the great teacher and preacher of eclectic knowledge pertaining to the philosophy expounded by the Upanishads. He had assumed the form of a horse and revealed the Shukla Yajur Veda to the great sage Yagyavalkya. He was also the teacher of Hanuman, said to be incarnate Wind God and Lord Shiva, and who was the great, most ardent and the wisest devotee of Lord Ram.]

२८. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च सोमो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/28. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as ‘Som or Soma¹’. [The word ‘Som’ refers to the Moon God, while the word ‘Soma’ refers to a drink derived from the sap of a herb of the same name that is used as sanctified drink during fire sacrifices. It is white in colour. This drink is offered to the Gods as well as taken as sanctified drink by the participants of the rituals. It is said that Soma, the drink, is stored in Som, the celestial Moon, thereby giving the latter its name ‘Som’. It is the elixir that gives ecstasy and bliss to the Gods. In the present context it means that both the elixir of life known as Soma as well as the Moon God who is charged with its custody are actually the Supreme Being revealed in their forms. The Soma is the Supreme Being’s magnificent quality of giving happiness, joys, bliss and ecstasy, while the glorious Moon in the heaven represents the virtues of providing peace, tranquility, calmness and rest to the creature who is finding himself agitated and restless due to the continuous turmoil and the numerous torments and miseries of this existential world.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/28).

[Note—¹The *Som* or the Moon God (also known as Chandrama)—He appears first in the Rig Veda, 10/85/19). He is the patron God of night. His origin is in the Mana (heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts) of the Parmatma or the supreme Lord (the Viraat Purush or Vishnu) (Yajur Veda, 31/12; Taittiriya Brahman, 3/10/8/5). His existence depends upon the Sun God. On the dark night, he is supposed to enter the Sun (Aiteriya Brahman, 8/28). Chandrama is synonymous with Som, the divine elixir and sanctified drink drunk during the religious sacrifices as it gives its drinker peace and a long life (Kaushatiki Brahman, 16/5; Aiteriya Brahman, 7/11). He is the controller of seasons and months; he always changes so appear to be like a new born everyday. He gives peace and long life to the 'Stota', the chanter of hymns as prayers (Rig Veda, 10/85/19).]

२९. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यानि नक्षत्राणि भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/29. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahman)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahman (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahman) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the different 'Nakshatras'¹, or stars and their constellations. [In other words, all the gross bodies in the heaven such as the numerous stars and their equally numerous clusters are one of the myriad forms of the supreme Lord known as Ram.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/29).

[Note—¹The *Nakshatras*—The word Nakshatra refers to the star or constellation (group or cluster of independent stars) that is present in the lunar mansion which is the 1/27th part of the path of the moon's revolution around the earth. It represents 13.33 degrees of the sky. Since the sidereal revolution time of the moon is a little less than 27 days and 8 hours, the moon travels through one Nakshatra during the course of a day. The day is therefore named after the particular Nakshatra through which the moon is passing on a particular day according to the lunar calendar. The Nakshatras occupy a very important place in astronomical and astrological calculations.

The Atharva Veda (14/7) and Maitraayaniya Sanhita (2/13/20) lists the names of twenty eight Nakshatras. These are the following—Ashvini, Bharani, Kritika, Rohini, Mrigshiras, Aardraa, Punarvasu, Pushya, Aashlesha, Maghaa, Purva-phaalguni, Uttar-phaalguni, Hastaa, Chitraa, Swaati, Vishaakhaa, Anuraadhaa, Jyeshthaa, Mulaa, Purva-aashaadha, Uttar-aashaadha, Shravanaa, Dhanisthaa, Shatabhisha, Purva-Bhaadra-padaa, Uttar-Bhaadra-padaa, and Revati.

The Purans however consider that the twenty seven Nakshatras are daughters of Daksha Prajapati and married to the Moon God called Chandra.

The Nakshatras are related to the twelve Zodiac signs called the Raashis. The Nakshatras are further classified as males and females, as well as benevolent ones and malevolent ones depending upon their positive or negative impact on the creature.]

३०. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये च नवग्रहा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/30. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'Nava Grahas'¹ or nine Grahas or planets. [In other words, all the planets in the heaven are one of the numerous forms of the supreme Lord known as Ram.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/30).

[Note—¹The *Nava-Grahas* or nine planets—The Navgrahas are the following—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu.

According to some texts, there are only eight Grahas or Astha Grahas because they treat the last two, i.e. Rahu and Ketu, as one entity. Refer Atharvashir Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition, Kandika 2, verse no. 9. This Upanishad is in honour of Lord Rudra as another name of Brahm, and says that Rudra is a personification of the eight Grahas.

The Vishnu Puran, section 2, canto 12, verse no. 1-28 describes the Grahas and their divine chariots and their horses.]

३१. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये चाऽष्टौ लोकपाला भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/31. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'eight Lokpaals'¹. [The word 'Lokpaal' means one who takes care of the world. Obviously, this role is played by Vishnu amongst the Trinity Gods. It is Vishnu who has incarnated as Lord Ram, so the similarity is evident. Here the implication is that the it is Lord Ram or Lord Vishnu who

has manifested himself as the eight Lokpaals to take care of the eight directions of the gross world.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/32).

[Note--¹The *eight Lokpals* are the custodians of the eight directions of the world. They are represented by the following— (i) Indra (the king of Gods), (ii) Agni (the Fire God), (iii) Yam (the Death God; also called Dharma Raj because he upholds righteousness and nobility of thoughts and conducts), (iv) Niriti (the God who controls death due to sins and evil tendencies as opposed to Yam who judges the destiny of those who die depending upon the content of righteousness and probity element in their earlier life), (v) Varun (the Water God), (vi) Vayu (the Wind God), (vii) Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), and (viii) Ish (Lord Shiva). Though Brahma (the creator) and Anant (Vishnu or Sheshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Vishnu reclines in the cosmic ocean called Kshir Sagar) are also considered guardians of the world and are listed as the last two amongst the ten Dignpals, but the above eight Gods are regarded as the Lokpals.]

३२. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये चाऽष्टौ वसवो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/32. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'eight Vasus'¹. [The Vasus are the Nature's gift to creature. They were the natural assets formed by the supreme Brahm so as to make life feasible and convenient in creation. In other words, the supreme Brahm who is also known as Lord Ram not only created this world but ensured that it is well provided for and its basic needs are taken care of by manifesting himself in the form of these eight primary requirements of life. This is the reason why one of the names of Vishnu is 'Vasudeo'—the Lord of Vasus. It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram is an incarnation of Vishnu or Vasudeo.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/32).

[Note—¹The *eight Vasus*—These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essential elements of life. They are eight in number as follows—Vishnu who is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most

potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus.

The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.]

३३. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये चैकादश रुद्रा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/33. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'eleven Rudras'¹. [The word 'Rudra' means angry, and it is one of the names of Lord Shiva, the concluder of creation and the third of the Trinity Gods. In other words, Lord Ram had assumed the form of Rudra or Shiva in order to bring this creation to conclusion. Refer verse no. 4/5 and 4/15.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/33).

[Note—¹The *eleven Rudras*—*Rudra* is the angry form of Lord Shiva. The word means 'the terrible one; the angry and ruthless one; one who roars and thunders; one who makes the enemy weep; one who destroys this trans-migratory world of birth and death; one who destroys ignorance and delusions; one who eliminates evil and perversions.'

Rudra is regarded as the father of Marut, the Wind God (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). Rudra assumes many forms—usually it is eleven forms (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/4/9/7), but sometimes they are also said to be thirty-three in number (Taittiriya Sanhita, 1/4/11/1). Rudra is regarded as having a close relationship with Agni, the Fire God (Shatpath Brahman, 5/2/4/13). The Padma Puran, Swargakhanda, Chapter 8 mentions only eight Rudras. These eight, eleven or thirty-three forms of Rudra might mean as many aspects of Shiva.

However, in terms of the Upanishads, the eleven Rudras stand for the ten vital winds called Prans + one Mana or mind. The ten Prans are five chief Prans such as Pran (breath), Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyan, and five subsidiary Prans such as Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-57 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

According to the epic Mahabharata, Anushasanparva, Chapter 14, it is Shiva in the form of Rudra who destroys this creation at the end of one cycle of creation.

The eleven Rudras are the various manifestations of Lord Shiva. They are the following:--(i) Mannu (मनु), (ii) Manu (मनु), (iii) Mahinas (महिनस), (iv) Mahaan (महान), (v) Shiva (शिव), (vi) Ritdwaj (ऋत्ध्वज), (vii) Ugrareta (उग्ररेता), (viii) Bhav (भव), (ix) Kaal (काल), (x) Vamdeo (वामदेव), and (xi) Dhritvrat (धृतिव्रत).]

३४. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् ये द्वादशाऽऽदित्या भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/34. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'twelve Adityas'¹. [The Aditya is the Sun God, and is regarded as the most potent and powerful evidence of the existence of the Supreme Being. Refer verse no. 4/27. This verse means that it is Lord Ram as the Supreme Being who has not only revealed himself as the Sun God but also keeps the celestial Sun burning and sustaining life in this world. The entire solar system revolves around the Sun, implying that the entire wheel of creation is centered on Lord Ram. The Lord is like the central axis around which the wheel spins.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/34).

[Note—¹The *twelve Adityas*— The *twelve Adityas*—(a) According to mythology, there are said to be *twelve Adityas* which are simply as many forms of the Sun God. These are the revelations of Brahm in the form of the Sun to carry out the following functions of creation—(a) take care of the world (Rig Veda, 2/27/4); (b) are like the heads (Taittiriya Brahman, 1/2/3/3) and eyes (Jaimini, Uttar. 2/1/2/3) of all the creatures.

These twelve Adityas appear first in the Rig Veda 1/41/4-6 and 2/27. They are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods (Atharva Veda, 8/9/21). They are the following—the eight Vasus + Indra + Sun + Vishnu + Shiva = twelve in number.]

३५. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च भूतं भव्यं भविष्यत् भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/35. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself in all the dimensions of time and space—the past, the present and the future. In other words, there is not a single moment when Lord Ram as the cosmic Consciousness is not present in this world. [This implies that

though the Lord's worldly sojourn had ended when he left this earth for his heavenly abode as described in all the Purans and the epic Ramayana as well as in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 9, he continuous to live amongst us at each moment of our lives.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/35).

३६. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यो ब्रह्माण्डस्याऽन्तर्बहिर्व्याप्नोति विराट् भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/36. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram, in his form as the Viraat Purush¹, who pervades uniformly throughout this universe and encloses it from all sides. He is present inside as well as outside this creation, being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-encompassing.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/36).

[Note—¹The *Viraat Purush*—The *Viraat Purush*, according to metaphysics, is the gross body of the creation and it is this body which is the source from which the rest of the cosmos was moulded or created or manifested. That is, the entire creation, both visible and invisible, is a manifested or revealed form of this Viraat Purush. Another word for the Viraat Purush is the Supreme Being who is all-encompassing and all-pervading.]

३७. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यो हिरण्यगर्भो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/37. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who had revealed himself as the Hiranyagarbha¹. [The 'Hiranyagarbha' is the cosmic egg from which the rest of the creation, including the Viraat Purush referred in verse no. 4/36 above, have emerged. It is the sum total of all subtle bodies of creation at the macrocosmic level of creation. Another name of

Hiranyagarbha is 'Brahma the creator'. In other words, it is Lord Ram who is none else but the supreme transcendental Brahm personified, and it is from him that both the cosmic egg known as Hiranyagarbha at the most subtle level of creation, and a more grosser form of it known as Brahma the creator had emerged at the very initial stages of creation.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/37).

[Note—¹*Hiranyagarbha*—The Hiranyagarbha is the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm, the Supreme Being, so called because it is akin to the cosmic golden egg lying in the womb of Brahm from which emerged the Viraat Purush, the gross body of Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. The word Hiranyagarbha has two components—'Hiranya' meaning yellow, and 'Garbha' meaning the womb. Hiranyagarbha was the primordial cosmic fertilised egg, deriving its name from the fact that its yolk core was yellow and glowing with an incandescent light like the one radiating out from the splendorous Sun in the sky, called the Maartand.

The concepts of *Viraat* and *Hiranyagarbha* are inter-related as the latter refers to the subtle body of Brahm and the former refers to the gross body of Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. They have their origin in the supreme Brahm called 'Adi-Narayan'. This concept has been elaborately explained in the Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 9-12, and Canto 3, paragraph nos. 7-14 in the context of genesis of creation.]

३८. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् या प्रकृति भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/38. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the 'Prakriti¹'. [The word 'Prakriti' refers to Nature in its macrocosmic dimension. This Prakriti forms the primary nature of the individual creature. It is the driving force that impels the creature to do something in a particular way and also decides his natural habits, temperaments, tendencies, desires and aversions etc. At the cosmic level, it is the womb in which the entire creation conceived by the Supreme Being was nourished and developed till it took its shape in the form of the visible world. Hence, this verse means that it is Lord Ram playing out his cosmic role as the Mother who would nourish the creation in her cosmic womb as well as give the would-be creation its characteristic personality by shaping its nature, inclinations, temperaments, desires and aversions, its Vasanas (passions) and Vrittis (natural tendencies) etc.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/38).

[Note—¹*Prakriti*—The word *Prakriti* basically means ‘nature’ with all its connotations. The Chambers dictionary defines it as the power that creates and regulates the world; the power of growth; the established order of things; the cosmos; the external world especially that untouched by man; the inherent qualities in anything that makes it what it is; the essence; the being; the constitution; a kind or order; naturalness; normal feeling; conformity to truth or reality; the inborn mind; the character, instinct or disposition; the vital power; the course of life; the nakedness of truth; the primitive undomesticated condition; the strength or substance of anything; a deity personifying some force of physical nature.

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his encyclopedic Sanskrit-English dictionary, describes it thus—‘making or placing before or at first’.

According to the Purans, this *Prakriti* or Nature has been personified as different Goddesses, while *Brahm* has been known as *Viraat Purush* in the terminology of Vedanta or the Upanishads, and *Vishnu* in the Purans. The *Shakti* is the female aspect of *Purush*, and is considered as inseparable from him; in fact they are two halves of the same *Brahm*. In order to create, *Brahm* revealed himself in these two primary forces—the ‘*Purush*’ and the ‘*Prakriti*’ which revealed themselves as the Universe.

According to Sankhya Shastra, *Prakriti* is the original producer of the material world.]

३९. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्चोङ्कारो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/39. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme *Brahm*)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental *Brahm* (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘*Bhagwan*’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental *Brahm*) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the ‘OM or Omkar’¹. [OM is the monosyllabic word standing for *Brahm*. Everything that exists is said to be incorporated in this single word. It is the Tarak Mantra as well. Hence, this verse implies that OM refers to Lord Ram as much as it is meant to refer to *Brahm*, the cosmic Consciousness. OM and the RAM are synonymous words—refer Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2-3; and Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-2; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-4 and the first half of verse no. 5.]

The three Lokas called *Bhu*, *Bhuvaha* and *Swaha* are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/39).

[Note—¹OM—It is the ethereal Mantra dedicated to the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being. It is the primary cosmic ‘sound’ from which the rest of the creation evolved as it provided the basic energy needed to start the process of change in the cosmic ether by stirring the stagnant gel at the beginning of the process of creation. It is OM that is revealed in the form of all knowledge and their encrypted form as the Vedas and other scriptures. It is the Beej Mantra or the seed Mantra of Brahm and the word by which the supreme transcendental Brahm is known and identified. The three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M, are said to be representative of the three phases of creation—i.e. ‘A’ stands for the beginning of creation, ‘U’ for its development and expansion, and ‘M’ for its conclusion. The three letters of the name of Lord Ram—viz. R, A and M correspond to these three letters, and by extension to the three primary phases in creation as outlined above.]

४०. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्चतस्रोऽर्धमात्रा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/40. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as the ‘four Ardha Maatraas’. [In other words, Lord Ram represents the four ‘Ardha Maatraas’. The Ardha Maatraas are the half-syllables used in Sanskrit language, and are placed above, below, before and after an alphabet to give it a proper sound. This helps the concerned alphabet to acquire a proper form and gives a meaning to the word of which the alphabet with its Ardha Maatraas is a constituent part. This personification of Sri Ram as Ardha Maatraas symbolises the fact that without him the creation loses its meaning, glory and existence even as a word loses its meaning and impact without the alphabets having proper Ardha Maatraas.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/40).

[Note—¹The *Ardha Maatraas*—In the context of OM, the Ardha Maatraa refers to a half-syllable placed at the end of the third letter ‘M’ of OM in the form of a ‘Halant’ or a mark of an oblique line placed below M. In the symbol of OM, it is represented by a horizontal ‘S’ sign placed to the right groove of the symbol which represents the long vowel sound of ‘Ooo’ in Sanskrit (like in *boot*). Normally, the letter ‘M’ of the word OM is to be hummed in a prolonged sound stretching into infinity. But since it is not done and the worshipper becomes silent, it is called ‘half Maatraa’ or half syllable. It is tantamount to conclusion of the word OM, and since OM is envisioned as representing the whole gamut of creation, this Ardha Maatraa is symbolic of conclusion of creation. That is why it is accompanied by the universal fire of destruction called the Samvartak Agni.

The Atharva-shikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that the Ardha Maatraa of OM represents the Moon God, the Mantras of the Atharva Veda, the Maruts (the Wind God), the Viraat Chanda and the Samvartak Agni. It is the fourth leg or Paad of Brahm and follows the third letter 'M' of OM.

The Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 7, paragraph no. 68 says that Lord Vishnu represents the Ardha Maatraa.]

४१. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च परमपुरुषो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/41. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who is a personification of the Supreme Being called the 'Param Purush'. [The word 'Param' means 'supreme and transcendental', while 'Purush' means a 'male'. Hence, the phrase 'Param Purush' refers to the supreme, transcendental macrocosmic form of the Male aspect of Nature; the supreme Lord of creation; the Viraat Purush in his most subtle and sublime cosmic form known as the Adi-Narayan or Maha-Vishnu that exists beyond the known world.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/41).

४२. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च महेश्वरो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/42. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Maheshwar'—the great Lord or the great Ishwar. [The word 'Mahesh' usually refers to Lord Shiva as he is regarded as the most wise and enlightened God in creation. The fact that Lord Shiva—or Maheshwar—is none else but Lord Ram in his form is also affirmed in verse no. 4/5 and 4/43. The word also means that Lord Ram is the Lord of all the Gods.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/42).

४३. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यश्च महादेवो भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/43. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

It is Lord Ram who has revealed himself as 'Mahadev'—the great God. [The word 'Mahadev' is conventionally used for Lord Shiva as he is regarded as the senior most God amongst all the Gods because of his high degree of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. Hence, this verse implies that it is Lord Ram himself who has manifested as Lord Shiva, the Lord known as Mahadev. Refer verse no. 4/5 and 4/42. The word also means that Lord Ram is the great God or Deva who is the senior most God amongst all the Gods.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/43).

४४. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् य ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय महाविष्णुभूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/44. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is 'Bhagwan' (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

Lord Ram is honoured and worshipped by the same twelve-lettered Mantra which is deemed fit and worthy to be used for honouring and worshipping the great Lord Maha-Vishnu, the Supreme Being. This eclectic Mantra is 'OM Namo Bhagwate Vashu Devaye' (ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय). [This shows that Lord Ram and Lord Maha-Vishnu are the same divine entity. It is in accordance to the eclectic philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta or the principle of non-duality. Refer also to verse no. 4/5.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/44).

४५. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यः परमात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/45. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra 'OM', himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

Lord Ram is the ‘Parmatma’ or the supreme Atma or the supreme Lord God of creation. Refer also to verse no. 4/1-4, 4/7-8, 4/36.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/45).

४६. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यो ज्ञानात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/46. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

Lord Ram is the ‘Gyan-Atma’—i.e. he is the personification of the pure Consciousness that is deemed to be knowledgeable, enlightened, wise, omniscient, all-knowing, sagacious and erudite. In other words, ignorance and delusions do not come within earshot of Lord Ram. This stanza might also be interpreted as to mean that Lord Ram is a personified form of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) as well as Atma (pure consciousness and the ‘true self’ of all the living beings. Hence, Lord Ram is Truth personified as Gyan and Atma are truthful. Refer verse no. 4/6, 4/8, 4/21-22.]

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/46).

४७. ॐ यो वै श्रीरामचन्द्रः स भगवान् यः सच्चिदानन्दा—द्वैतैकरसात्मा भूर्भुवः स्वस्तस्मै वै नमो नमः ।

4/47. OM salutations (or salutations to the supreme Brahm)! The most divine Lord Sri Ramchandra is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm (or the Supreme Being), who is addressed by the ethereal Mantra ‘OM’, himself personified.

Indeed, he is ‘Bhagwan’ (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm) himself personified.

Lord Ram is a personification of the virtues of ‘Sat, Chit and Anand’—i.e. he is truthfulness, consciousness and blissfulness personified.

The three Lokas called Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha are nothing but the same divine Lord revealed in those forms.

I most reverentially and repeatedly bow before such a great and divine Lord known as Sri Ramchandra (4/47).

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Section-3/Part-2

In this Part 2 of Section 3 of our book, we shall read the divine 108 glorious holy and divine Names of Lord Ram as they were pronounced by Lord Shiva. There are two ancient scriptures where these names are enumerated—one is the Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 281, verse nos. 30-48, and the other is the Anand Ramayan, Purva Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 32-51. We shall read both of them for their magnificence, beauty, spiritual rewards and our knowledge of the divinity of Lord Ram who was none else but the Supreme Being himself manifested in his human form.

First we shall read the hymns of the Padma Puran, and then those of the Anand Ramayan.

At the end of this section we shall see the significance of the figure '108'.

108 Divine Names of Lord Ram according to the Padma Puran

Lord Ram's great 108 Names are enumerated in the Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 281, verse nos. 30-48. They were pronounced by Lord Shiva for the benefit of his divine consort goddess Parvati.

It so happened that once Lord Shiva invited goddess Parvati (pronounced as *Paarvati*) to share their meal together on the summit of Mt. Kailash, which is the abode of Lord Shiva on earth. Parvati replied that she would eat only after she had paid her obeisance to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, by using the Lord's one thousand divine Names. At this, Lord Shiva told her—'You are really blessed that you have so much devotion for Lord Vishnu. But I depend on Lord Ram's holy and divine Name 'Ram' for all my spiritual purposes, and for me this single name 'Ram' is equivalent to thousands of Lord Vishnu. So oh goddess, you can take this single name 'Ram' and feel rest assured that you would have taken the thousand holy and divine names of Lord Vishnu. Thus, say 'Ram' and come to share the meal with me.'

Parvati obeyed her husband's orders because she knew very well that there was no one more enlightened and wise than Lord Shiva in this creation, so he must be correct. After meals, she said to Shiva—'Oh Lord. You have said that the single name of Lord Ram, i.e. 'Ram', is equivalent to thousands of names of Lord Vishnu. This has aroused great faith in the holy name 'Ram' in me, and I wonder that if a single name is so powerful and profound, what would be the potential of other names of Lord Ram if one were to take all of them. It boggles my mind, and I am very eager to know the other holy names of the Lord. So Lord, if there are other such great names of the Lord, please tell me about them.'

Shiva replied—'Alright. I shall tell you the other names of Lord Ram. Indeed, all the countless divine names of the Supreme Being as narrated in the Vedas as well as traditionally known by this world are different variations of the holy name of Lord Ram. Lord Ram also has one thousand names, but out of them there are one hundred eight names which have greater importance and are considered prominent. Even as each single name of Lord Vishnu has more divinity, blessedness and holiness than all the hymns of

the Vedas put together, the single name 'Ram' of Lord Ram is regarded as being equivalent to thousands of holy names and hymns.

Oh Parvati! More powerful spiritual benefits are obtainable by doing Japa (repetition) of one single name 'Ram' than chanting all the hymns of the Vedas or repeating so many other names of different forms of the Supreme Being.

That said and done, now let me tell you (Parvati) the one hundred eight divine and holy names of Lord Ram which have been sung by great sages and seers.

ॐ श्रीरामो रामचन्द्रश्च रामभद्रश्च शाश्वतः । राजीवलोचनः श्रीमान् राजेन्द्रो रघुपुङ्गवः ॥ १ ॥

Line no. 1 = ॐ श्रीरामो (1) 'OM Sri Ramo'—Salutations to Lord Ram who is the Supreme Being represented by the divine cosmic word OM. Lord Ram is the Lord God who is invoked by great sages and ascetics when they do meditation using this Mantra 'OM'.

रामचन्द्रश्च (2) 'Ramchandrascha'—Lord Ram is as beautiful, comforting, enchanting and soothing as the full Moon (Chandra). [Again, since the Moon is regarded as a heavenly pitcher of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, Lord Ram also provides the same benefits to his devotees and followers.]

रामभद्रश्च (3) 'Ram Bhadrasha'—The gentleman Lord Ram is extremely polite, courteous, affable and amiable.

शाश्वतः । (4) 'Shaashwat'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is eternal, truthful and universal.

राजीवलोचनः (5) 'Rajiv Lochan'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has eyes which are like the lotus flower. [Lord Ram's eyes are as beautiful as the lotus flower.]

श्रीमान् राजेन्द्रो (6) 'Srimaan Raajendro'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is endowed with all the grandeur, majesty, magnificence, authority, power and dignity that befits an Emperor. The Lord is an Emperor amongst Kings.

रघुपुङ्गवः ॥ (7) 'Raghu-pungav'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the best in the race of kings of the Raghu dynasty (who ruled over the ancient kingdom of Ayodhya).

जानकीवल्लभो जैत्रो जितामित्रो जनार्दनः । विश्वामित्रप्रियो दान्तः शरण्यत्राणतत्परः ॥ २ ॥

Line no. 2 = जानकीवल्लभो (8) 'Jaanki-Vallabho'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is most dear to Sita, known as 'Janki', the daughter of king Janak. [Sita, also known as Janki, was the divine consort of Lord Ram. She is known as 'Jaanki' or 'Janki' because she was the daughter of king Janak. 'Janki' = the daughter of Janak; Sita; 'Vallabho' = one who is very dear; a husband.]

जैत्रो (9) 'Jaitro'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is always victorious and invincible.

जितामित्रो (10) 'Jitaa-mitro'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a friendly conqueror. [The word implies that the Lord is not a ruthless, tyrannical and merciless conqueror who likes to spill blood of enemies. He is 'friendly' in the sense that if the opponent of the Lord pleads for mercy, the Lord goes all out to forgive him and accept him as one of his own subjects. 'Jita' = to win; 'Mitra' = a friend. 'A-mitra' = one who is not friendly.]

जनार्दनः । (11) 'Janaardan'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is merciful, benevolent, kind and gracious to all his subjects (i.e. the creatures of the world). He pays attention to their prayers and listens to them all compassionately. ['Jan' = the subjects of a king's realm; dependants; 'Aardan' = one who gives succour and relief from, or eliminates agonies, miseries and problems.]

विश्वामित्रप्रियो (12) 'Vishwamitra-priyo'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is dear to sage Vishwamitra; or the Lord who is a friend ('Mitra') of the whole world ('Vishwa'). [Sage Vishwamitra was the one whose fire sacrifice was protected by the Lord from being defiled by the demons. The Lord was very dear to the sage, and it was this sage who was instrumental in the Lord's marriage with Sita at Janakpur.]

दान्तः (13) 'Daanta'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has exemplary self-control or self-restraint over his sense organs. [There are said to be ten sense organs—five of perception and five of action. The five sense organs of perception are eyes which see, nose which smells, ears which hear, tongue which tastes, and skin which feels. The five sense organs of action are the hands which receive things and do deeds, the legs which take one to his destination, the mouth which helps one to speak and eat and drink, the excretory which help to eliminate waste from the body, and the genitals which help to give pleasure as well as to reproduce. The mind is also sometimes regarded as one of the subtle aspects of the sense organs because it is the mind that controls everything. Hence, Lord Sri Ram has control over all of them.]

शरण्यत्राणतत्परः ॥ (14) 'Sharanya-traan-tatpar'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is always eager to and engaged in giving protection to those who have taken refuge or shelter with him. ['Sharanya' = to take shelter and refuge with someone, seeking his protection; 'Traan' = to remove or provide relief from torments, grief, pain and miseries; to grant protection, shelter, relief, security etc.; 'Tatpar' = to be eager, diligent, ever-ready and careful to do something.]

वालिप्रमथनो वाग्मी सत्यवाक् सत्यविक्रमः । सत्यव्रतो व्रतफलः सदा हनुमदाश्रयः ॥ ३ ॥

Line no. 3 = वालिप्रमथनो (15) 'Vaali-pramathano'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed ('Pramathan') the monkey named Vaali. [Vaali was the elder brother of Sugriv and the king of the monkey race. He had thrashed his younger brother Sugriv due to some misunderstanding and threw him out of the kingdom, thereby usurping his share and right to the throne of Kishkindha, the capital of the kingdom of monkeys. Not only this, Vaali had also kept Sugriv's lawful wife as his mistress, a deed which is totally unethical. Lord Ram had slayed Vaali when Sugriv complained of the injustice that was done to him by his own brother. 'Pramathan' = to stir, churn, kill, destroy.]

वाग्मी (16) 'Vaagmi'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is an expert orator, speaker and preacher; he is an expert with the use of words; his voice and speech are both pleasant and fit for the occasion. [It implies that Lord Ram is highly erudite, learned, wise and scholarly because he has to speak articulately and in a convincing manner. 'Vaagmi' also means that the Lord personifies the glorious virtues of knowledge, erudition and wisdom embodied in the form of goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of these virtues. Lord Ram, being the

Supreme Being, inspires goddess Saraswati to bless great souls of this creation with the grand virtues of wisdom, erudition and knowledge, which are then passed on by them for the benefit of the rest of this creation by expressing themselves with the help of wise words of wisdom. ‘Vaak’ = speech. ‘Vaagmi’ = eloquent, learned, well-spoken, wise in expression.]

सत्यवाक् (17) ‘Satya-vaak’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is always truthful, and he always speaks the truth. [‘Satya’ = truth, truthfulness; ‘Vaak’ = words, speech.]

सत्यविक्रमः । (18) ‘Satya-vikram’—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is truly heroic, strong, invincible, powerful, valorous and valiant. (b) The Lord is truly a strong, powerful and invincible warrior. (c) The Lord is strong and powerful and effective in upholding the virtues of Truth, and he forcefully, authoritatively and powerfully enforces the principles of Truth. He is always successful in doing it; he cannot be defeated in this (upholding Truth). [‘Vikram’ = heroic, having valour, valiant, possessing prowess, strength; to be excellent and best in any field, especially that which requires strength and valour.]

सत्यव्रतो (19) ‘Satya-vrato’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is steadfast in upholding the vows and the principles of ‘truthfulness’. The Lord not only resolutely follows the doctrine of Truth himself but has also taken the vow or has promised to ensure its enforcement in this creation. [‘Vrat’ = vow, promise, determination, resolution.]

व्रतफलः (20) ‘Vrat-phal’—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is like the auspicious reward got by doing all sorts of austerities, observing strict codes of conduct, and diligently following the laws of virtuousness, righteousness and probity. (b) The Lord is attained by doing these religious duties and keeping auspicious vows. [‘Vrat’ = vow, resolution, observation of religious duties and sacraments, undertaking austerities and undergoing suffering for some religious and noble cause. ‘Phal’ = fruit, reward, result, consequence.]

सदा हनुमदाश्रयः ॥ (21) ‘Sadaa Hanumadaa-sraya’—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is a constant source of support and succour for Hanuman. (b) Hanuman always finds his constant succour and eternal refuge with the Lord (Sri Ram). [Hanuman was Lord Ram’s greatest devotee, and he was instrumental in the Lord’s victory over the demons at Lanka and recovery of Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana. Though depicted as being a monkey like the other companions of the Lord in the forest and his army, Hanuman was an exceptional case—he was very learned and wise. He spoke fluent Sanskrit, the classical language of ancient India at the time of his first meeting with Lord Ram at the foot of Mt. Rishyamook where the Lord had gone wandering in the search of Sita. Hanuman was the one who had made Sugriv and Lord Ram friends, he was the one who was chosen to go across the ocean to Lanka in search of Sita, he was the first messenger of the Lord who had settled scores with the demons in a token way by burning the city of Lanka and bringing the demon army to its heels, he was the one who had brought the herbs which helped revive Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram, when he fell unconscious in the battle at Lanka, and he was the one who had played a pivotal role in the Lord’s final victory over the demons. On more than one occasion, Lord Ram has himself praised Hanuman and said that he will never be able to repay his debts and obligations. ‘Sadaa’ = always; ‘Hanumad’ = pertaining or related to Hanuman; ‘Aasray’ = refuge, shelter, support, help, something or someone to fall back upon in distress and emergencies when one has no other means left.]

कौसल्येयः खरध्वंसी विराधवधपण्डितः । विभीषणपरित्राता दशग्रीवशिरोहरः ॥ ४॥

Line no. 4 = कौसल्येयः (22) 'Kausalyeya'—The Lord (Sri Ram) became a son of Kaushalya. [The reading of this verse shows that there is an element of wonder that the Supreme Being, the Supreme Lord of creation who is formless, without attributes, almighty, all-pervading and all-encompassing, should become a son of a human queen known as Kaushalya. The reason is that she had done severe penance in her previous life as Satrupa, who was the chaste wife Manu, the first male human being. Satrupa and Manu had both requested Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being which revealed himself before the couple, that they wished to have the Lord as their son. It was due to this boon that the Lord had granted to them at that time that he took birth as the son of Kaushalya, the chief queen of king Dasrath who was Manu in his previous life.]

खरध्वंसी (23) 'Khar-dhwansi'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had crushed (vanquished, killed) the demon named Khar. [This incident happened in the forest known as Panchvati. A demoness known by the name of Supernakha got so infatuated at the beauty of Lord Ram that she assumed the form of a bewitching beauty and proposed marriage to Lord Ram. The all-knowing Lord saw her deceit, and had got her nose and ears chopped-off as a punishment. This enraged her brothers Khar and Dushan. The two demons gathered a huge army and rushed to avenge their sister's deformation. It was in the ensuing battle that Lord Ram had killed Khar along with Dushan. 'Khar' = name of a demon; 'Dhwansi' = one who crushes, demolishes or destroys.]

विराधवधपण्डितः । (24) 'Viraadh-badh-pandit'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had expertly killed the great demon named Viraadh. [This incident occurred in the dense and uninhabitable part of the forest as Lord proceeded ahead after his meeting with sage Atri. Viraadh was a formidable and horrifying demon with a colossus body, strong jaws and sharp teeth. As he approached the Lord, he was grabbing and eating countless wild elephants, buffaloes and lions; a number of human bodies were impaled on the trident lying on his shoulder. As soon as Viraadh appeared before the Lord he was killed. Viraadh immediately assumed a divine form and went to the heaven. In his previous life he was a semi-god known as Vimal-tejomaya Vidhyadhar. He had become a demon as the result of a curse of sage Durvasa. Upon being killed by Lord Ram he found liberation and deliverance from his sinful body of a demon and reverted to his original form. 'Viraadh' = a demon with this name; 'Badh' = kill; 'Pandit' = an expert.]

विभीषणपरित्राता (25) 'Vibhishan-paritraataa'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had protected Vibhishan (from the danger of his elder brother Ravana, the ferocious demon king of Lanka). [Vibhishan was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. He had known that Lord Ram is no one else but Vishnu in a human form. He was kicked out by Ravana when he tried to persuade the latter to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid a ruinous war. So he joined Lord Ram and fought alongside the Lord in the epic war of Lanka. When the war was won by the Lord, Vibhishan was made the king of Lanka. 'Paritraataa' = one who provides freedom from torments and miseries.]

दशग्रीवशिरोहरः ॥ (26) 'Dashgreev-shirohar'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had cut-off the ten heads of Ravana (the demon king of Lanka). [The main purpose of Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Lord Ram was to kill this cruel demon called Ravana. He had got ten heads as a result

of a boon granted by Lord Shiva who was pleased by his offering of his own head to the Lord during a fire sacrifice. Legend has it that inspite of being a demon, Ravana was well-versed in the scriptures and their philosophy. A close reading of the Ramayana shows that he had abducted Sita with the sole intention of getting himself killed by Lord Ram because he knew that it is the only way he can find Mukti (liberation and deliverance) from the sinful body of a demon. ‘Das’ = ten; ‘Greev’ = necks, implying heads; ‘Shir’ = heads; ‘Har’ = one who steals or takes away or dispossesses someone of his possession.]

सप्ततालप्रभेता च हरकोदण्डखण्डनः । जामदग्न्यमहादर्पदलनस्ताटकान्तकृत् ॥ ५ ॥

Line no. 5 = सप्ततालप्रभेता (27) ‘Sapta-taal-prabhettaa’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had cut seven coconut trees with a single arrow. [This allures to the incident when Sugriv, the monkey friend of Lord Ram, had asked the Lord to fell the seven coconut tree as a test to see if the Lord would be able to kill Sugriv’s brother and arch rival Vaali who had usurped the kingdom of Kishkindha from him and thrown him out into exile at Mt. Rishyamook. It so happened that Vaali used to shake these trees unnecessarily and fell their fruits. The sages who partook of these fruits got annoyed and had cursed Vaali that anyone who was able to fell these trees in one attempt would also be able to kill him. ‘Sapta’ = seven; ‘Taal’ = coconut tree; ‘Prabhettaa’ = one who pierces.]

च हरकोदण्डखण्डनः । (28) ‘Harkodanda-khandan’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had broken the bow of Lord Har (Shiva). [This refers to the bow-breaking ceremony at Janakpur. Lord Ram had married Sita by breaking this bow of Lord Shiva. ‘Har’ = Lord Shiva; ‘Kodanda’ = bow; ‘Khandan’ = to break.]

जामदग्न्यमहादर्पदलनस्ताटकान्तकृत् ॥ (29) ‘Jamdagna-mahaadarpa-dalan’—The Lord who had vanquished or crushed the extreme sense of ego, haughtiness and arrogance of sage Parashuram. [This refers to the same bow-breaking when the sage had come angrily to punish anyone who had broken Lord Shiva’s bow. Lord Ram had then subdued him politely. The sage was renowned as a very haughty and proud man who thought himself to be invincible and an arch enemy of the Kshatriya class, the warrior class, to which Lord Ram belonged. ‘Jamdagna’ = sage Parashuram; ‘Maha’ = great; ‘Darpa’ = arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy, vanity, false pride, ego; ‘Dalan’ = to vanquish, crush, destroy, trample underfoot, eliminate, subdue.]

(30) ‘Tatakaanta-krit’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had brought about an end to (i.e. killed) the demoness named Tadka. [She was killed when she attacked Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and sage Vishwamitra when the three were on the way to the sage’s hermitage from Ayodhya. ‘Taadka’ = a demoness; ‘Anta’ = to bring an end to, kill; ‘Krit’ = a deed or action, to do something, to bring about some happening to fruition.]

वेदान्तपारो वेदात्मा भवबन्धैकभेषजः । दूषणत्रिशिरोऽरिश्च त्रिमूर्तिस्त्रिगुणस्त्रयी ॥ ६ ॥

Line no. 6 = वेदान्तपारो (31) 'Vedaanta-paaro'—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is beyond the reach of the Vedas. (b) The Lord who is an expert in the Vedas. [The Vedas are the most ancient scriptures of India. Originally they were one continuous chain of hymns meant primarily meant to be used during fire sacrifices. Later on sage Veda Vyas classified them into four categories according to the needs of the fire sacrifice. Thus now we have four Vedas known as the Rig/Rik Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The Yajur Veda is further divided into Shukla and Krishna branches. This name of the Lord has two meanings—one, it means that even the most ancient treatise on religion is unable to tell with certainty who is that Supreme Being to whom the hymns are being said and offerings are being made. And two, it means that Lord Ram is an expert in the most profound and esoteric knowledge contained in the Vedas. 'Veda' = the primary scriptures which are considered as the repository of knowledge; 'Anta' = end; 'Paaro' = to be beyond its reach.]

वेदात्मा (32) 'Vedaa-tma'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the soul ('Atma') representing the essence, the spiritual truth, and the great principles of religion taught by the Vedas. [Lord Ram is a personified form of the essence of the principal ancient scriptures known as the Vedas. Even as a body is dead without the soul, the Vedas would lose their meaning and relevance if the Lord is removed from them. All the Vedas preach about the Supreme Being who is none else but Lord Ram.]

भवबन्धकभेषजः । (33) 'Bhav-bandhaik-bheshaj'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is like the only remedy ('Bheshaj') for all ills created by this mundane and deluding world; it is the Lord who is the only medium by which one can find freedom from the fetters represented by this entangling and deluding world; the Lord helps one unshackle oneself from this world which is like a formidable bondage. Lord Ram is like an infallible herb that can cure all the ailments that afflict a creature because of his involvement in this world which is like a huge and abominable shackle. 'Bhav' = the world of delusions and entanglements; 'Bhandha' = fetter, shackle, bondage, slavery, to be tied down, entanglements, to be enmeshed in; 'Bheshaj' = medicine, herb, remedy, drug.]

दूषणत्रिशिरोऽरिश्च (34) 'Dushan-trishiro-arishcha'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is an enemy ('Ari') of the two demons known as Dushan and Trishira. [These two demons had accompanied Khar to attack Lord Ram after the incidence of deformation of the demoness Supernakha. Refer name no. 23. The word 'Ari' means an enemy.]

त्रिमूर्तिस्त्रिगुणस्त्रयी ॥ (35) 'Trimurti'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a personified form of the Trinity Gods—viz. Lord Brahma the creator, Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Lord Shiva the concluder of creation. ['Tri' = three; 'Murti' = form, image.]

(36) 'Triguna'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a foundation upon which all the three ('Tri') legendary and celebrated Gunas rest; the Lord is a personified form of the three Gunas. [These three Gunas are known as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. They decide the character, the temperament, the inherent nature, the thought processes and the behaviour of all living beings in this world. The Sata Guna is the best, the Tama Guna is the worst, and the Raja Guna is the medium quality. Since the entire world is a revelation of the same Supreme Being known as Ram, it follows that the Lord also embodies these three Gunas because these Gunas are part of creation.]

(37) 'Trayi'—The Lord who personifies the three Vedas, as well as all the three aspects of creation (such as the past, the present and the future). ['Trayi' = the three principle Vedas—the Rig/Rik Veda, the Sam Veda and the Yajur Veda.]

त्रिविक्रमस्त्रिलोकात्मा पुण्यचारित्रकीर्तनः । त्रिलोकरक्षको धन्वी दण्डकारण्यवासकृत् ॥ ७॥

Line no. 7 = त्रिविक्रमस्त्रिलोकात्मा (38) ‘Trivikram’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had measured the entire creation/universe in three steps during his incarnation as Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant. [This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. When Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a ‘Vaaman’ or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali’s own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali. He put his third step on Bali’s head and pushed the latter to the nether world. Hence, Vishnu is also called ‘Trivikram’—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps. But the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice done to a magnanimous Bali who had been righteous and firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitments. So, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gatekeeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.]

Since the word ‘Tri’ means three, and ‘Vikram’ means one who has obtained victory convincingly, the term ‘Trivikram’ is used to mean Lord Vaaman as he had established his lordship over the three worlds by simply and literally walking or stepping over them.]

(39) ‘Trilok-aatma’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Atma (soul) of the entire living creation consisting of the three worlds (‘Trilok’ = the terrestrial world, the subterranean world, and the heavens).

पुण्यचारित्रकीर्तनः । (40) ‘Punya-charitra-kirtan’—The divine deeds of the Lord (Sri Ram) are most auspicious and holy to narrate. [‘Punya’ = auspicious, holy and righteous deeds; ‘Charitra’ = deeds done by someone during his lifetime; his character, virtues, qualities and personality; ‘Kirtan’ = to sing aloud, applaud, praise publicly and laud someone’s greatness and great deeds vocally and articulately so that others can hear of them and join such applause.]

त्रिलोकरक्षको (41) ‘Trilok-rakshako’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a protector of the three worlds [‘Trilok’— the terrestrial world, the subterranean world, and the heavens. ‘Rakshako’— one who protects.]

धन्वी (42) ‘Dhanvi’—The Lord (Sri Ram) holds a glorious bow (in his hands). [‘Dhanush’, the bow, is called ‘Saarang’. ‘Dhanvi’ is the holder of this bow. Hence, it refers to Lord Vishnu who holds the Saarang bow. This bow is also known as the ‘Shaankhya Dhanush’. It was made from the bones of demon named Shaankhya-chuda after he was

killed by Lord Shiva. According to *Krishna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 23, the Shaarang bow of Lord Vishnu stands for the Vaishnavi Maya which is the primary form of Maya closely associated with Vishnu. As a protector of the entire creation, Lord Ram—who is none else but Lord Vishnu himself, holds this bow to protect the entire creation.]

दण्डकारण्यवासकृत् ॥ (43) ‘Danda-kaaranya-vaaskrit’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had lived (‘Vaas’) in the forest called Danda-kaaranya and performed or did (‘Krit’) many mystical deeds there. [The Dandakaaranya was the most uninhabitable and fierce part of the forest. It was infested by demons and ogres. This forest was the area where Lord Ram had spent the major part of his forest exile, and it covers all the events as mentioned in the ‘Aranya kand’ of the epic Ramayana/Ram Charit Manas.]

An interesting legend is associated with this forest. ‘Dandak’ was one of the hundred princes who were the sons of king Ikshvaku dynasty. Dandak was assigned to rule over this area. He was of a promiscuous nature and had once molested Arjuna, the daughter of his own Guru, moral preceptor and teacher, named Shukraacharya. The Guru cursed him, and as a result the entire kingdom was decimated and reduced to an uninhabitable and barren stretch of land. Since Dandak was the cause of this, the entire land was named after him to remind and warn the coming generation to be careful about what they do and how they behave. Since it was left alone from being overcrowded, sages, hermits and ascetics made it their home. Being thus blessed by their august presence, some of the curse was neutralized and it got the name ‘Janasthaan’—a place that was inhabited by Gyanis or learned and realised souls. According to modern historians, the area of modern India that falls around Nasik, a city along the western seaboard of the country, was the area called Danda-kaaranya in ancient times.]

अहल्यापावनश्चैव पितृभक्तो वरप्रदः । जितेन्द्रियो जितक्रोधो जितलोभो जगद्गुरुः ॥ ८ ॥

Line no. 8 = अहल्यापावनश्चैव (44) ‘Ahalyaa-paavan’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had made Ahilya ‘Paavan’ or pure and freed her from her curse. [This refers to the incident when the Lord had touched a rock with his feet while on the way to sage Vishwamitra’s hermitage. This rock was Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, who had been turned into this form due to the curse of the sage due to some misunderstanding. The touch of the dust of the Lord’s feet had freed her from this curse, and she resumed her divine form and went back to her husband.]

पितृभक्तो (45) ‘Pitri-bhakto’—The Lord (Sri Ram) was very devoted (obedient) to his father (Dasrath). [‘Pitri’ = related to one’s father; ‘Bhakta’ = one who is devoted to someone.]

वरप्रदः । (46) ‘Var-prad’—The Lord (Sri Ram) grants boons and blessings (to his devotees and followers). [‘Var’ = boons, blessings, grants, grace; ‘Prad’ = to give, bestow, grant, bless.]

जितेन्द्रियो (47) ‘Jitendriya’—The Lord (Sri Ram) has exemplary self-restraint over his sense organs. [‘Jita’ = to obtain victory; ‘Jitendra’ = one who has obtained such victory; ‘Indri’ = sense organs. Refer name no. 13.]

जितक्रोधो (48) 'Jit-krodho'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has conquered/vanquished anger; the Lord has obtained victory over anger and wrathfulness. ['Jit' = to conquer and obtain victory over; 'Krodh' = anger.]

जितलोभो (49) 'Jit-lobho'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has conquered greed, avarice and rapacity. ['Lobha' = greed, avarice, rapacity.]

जगद्गुरुः ॥ (50) 'Jagat-guru'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the preceptor and moral guide ('Guru') for the whole world ('Jagat'). [The Lord teaches the world by his own example.]

ऋक्षवानरसंघाती चित्रकूटसमाश्रयः । जयन्तत्राणवरदः सुमित्रापुत्रसेवितः ॥ ९ ॥

Line no. 9 = ऋक्षवानरसंघाती (51) 'Riksha-vaanar-sanghaati'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had assembled, commanded and led an army of bears and monkeys. [This army accompanied the Lord from Kishkindha and helped him conquer Lanka and kill the demons led by Ravana to retrieve Sita who was abducted by this demon. The monkey army was led by Sugriv, the monkey king, and Jamvant, the bear king. 'Riksha' = bears; 'Vaananar' = monkeys; 'Sanghaati' = a companion, a friend, an associate, an ally.]

चित्रकूटसमाश्रयः । (52) 'Chitrakoot-samaasraya'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had lived and had taken shelter in Chitrakoot (during his sojourn in the forest). ['Chitrakoot' was a pleasant area of the forest where Lord Ram lived before he entered the fearful area of the forest known as Dandakaaranya. Chitrakoot was where Bharat, his younger brother, had gone to try to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. In modern India it is in the central part of the country. 'Aasray' = to take shelter in, to live or dwell in; a dwelling place.]

जयन्तत्राणवरदः (53) 'Jayanta-traan-varad'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had granted pardon to Jayant and saved him from the fear of death that was tormenting him. [Jayant was a mischievous son of Indra, the king of Gods. Once he had wished to test the might of Lord Ram, and so had assumed the form of a crow and pricked at the feet of Sita. When the Lord saw blood oozing out of the wound, he plucked a reed and used it as an arrow to punish Jayant. The latter went all over the heaven seeking protection, but no one—even his father Indra, was able to give him any assurance against the wrath of Lord Ram. Finally, seeing him terrified, sage Narad (pronounced as Naa-rud) advised him to go plead for mercy with the Lord himself. When Jayant came to seek pardon from Lord Ram, the Lord excused him and granted him immunity from death. But since his arrow could not be failed, the Lord decided to make Jayant blind in one eye. It is believed that all the crows became blind in one eye since then. This is also the reason why crows are regarded as bad and ugly birds who are meat eaters. 'Jayant' = the son of Indra; 'Tran' = to remove or provide relief from torments, grief, pain and miseries; to grant protection, shelter, relief, security etc.; 'Varad' = to grant, bless, give boon, to assure immunity from fear.]

सुमित्रापुत्रसेवितः ॥ (54) 'Sumitraa-putra-sevit'—The Lord (Sri Ram) was faithfully and diligently served by the son of Sumitra (i.e. Laxman, his younger brother who accompanied the Lord to the forest). ['Sumitra' = the mother of Laxman; 'Putra' = son; 'Sevit' = served by.]

सर्वदेवाधिदेवश्च मृतवानरजीवनः । मायामारीचहन्ता च महाभागो महाभुजः ॥ १० ॥

Line no. 10 = सर्वदेवाधिदेवश्च (55) ‘Sarwa-devaa-dhi-dev’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Chief of all the Gods in this creation, he is superior to all of them and their Lord as he is the Supreme Being. [‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Dev’ = God, Lord; ‘Devaa-dhi-dev’ = superior to all the Gods.]

मृतवानरजीवनः । (56) ‘Mrit-vaanar-jivan’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had granted fresh life to the monkeys who had died (during the war of Lanka). [‘Mrit’ = those who had died; ‘Vaanar’ = monkey; ‘Jivan’ = life.]

मायामारीचहन्ता (57) ‘Maayaa-maarich-hantaa’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed the demon Marich who had assumed a deceitful form (of a golden deer so that Ravana could steal Sita). [This incident happened in the part of the forest called Panch-Vati. Ravana was instigated by Supernakha, a demoness who was earlier deformed by Laxman on the instructions of Lord Ram when she tried to lure the Lord into having illicit relationship with her. He forced Marich to assume the form of a golden deer so attractive that it would motivate Sita to ask Lord Ram to bring it to her. Once the Lord went to capture it or hunt it down, Ravana got an opportunity to abduct Sita from the hermitage. Meanwhile, Lord Ram pursued Marich in the form of a golden deer and killed him. ‘Maya’ = deceitful, illusionary; ‘Maarich’ = a demon; ‘Hantaa’ = killer, slayer, eliminator, destroyer.]

च महाभागो (58) ‘Mahaa-bhaago’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is most fortunate, extremely lucky, and blessed with unmatched good fortunes. [‘Maha’ = great, immense, vast; ‘Bhaagya’ = good luck and fortune; ‘Bhaago’ = one who is fortunate and lucky.]

महाभुजः ॥ (59) ‘Mahaa-bhuj’—The Lord (Sri Ram) has long arms. [That is, the Lord has a long reach, that is nothing that he can’t do or achieve, and he gives immense protection to his devotees with his able and strong hands. ‘Maha’ = great, large, long, vast; ‘Bhuj’ = arms.]

सर्वदेवस्तुतः सौम्यो ब्रह्मण्यो मुनिसत्तमः । महायोगी महोदारः सुग्रीवस्थिरराज्यदः ॥ ११ ॥

Line no. 11 = सर्वदेवस्तुतः (60) ‘Sarwa-dev-stut’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is praised, respected, honoured, revered and lauded by all the Gods. [‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Dev’ = gods; ‘Stut’ = praised, lauded, honoured.]

सौम्यो (61) ‘Saumya’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is calm, poised, polite, civil and courteous.

ब्रह्मण्यो (62) ‘Brahmany’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is dear to the Brahmins. [‘Brahmins’ are traditionally regarded as being learned and wise people. They are said to be ordained by the creator to act as preachers and moral teachers and guides for the rest of the society.]

मुनिसत्तमः । (63) ‘Muni-sattam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the best amongst the sages and seers. The Lord has all the best of the divine and the glorious virtues that great sages, hermits, seers and saints possess. [‘Muni’ = sages, hermits; ‘Sattam’ = the best.]

महायोगी (64) ‘Mahaa-yogi’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a great ascetic and hermit. [‘Mahaa’ = great; ‘Yogi’ = ascetic, hermit.]

महोदारः (65) ‘Maho-daar’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is most magnanimous, benevolent and gracious; the Lord gives freely, liberally, charitably and without reservations. [‘Maho’ = great; ‘Udaar’ = magnanimous, benevolent, charitable, kind, broad-hearted giver.]

सुग्रीवस्थिरराज्यदः ॥ (66) ‘Sugriv-sthir-raajyad’—The Lord (Sri Ram) gave a stable (unchallenged) kingdom to Sugriv (the monkey king of Kishkindha whose army had helped the Lord conquer Lanka and retrieve Sita). [‘Sugriv’ = the monkey king of Kishkindha; ‘Sthir’ = steady, constant, unmoving and established; ‘Raajyad’ = to give kingdom to, to establish someone as a king, to grant a kingdom.]

सर्वपुण्याधिकफलः स्मृतसर्वाघनाशनः । आदिपुरुषो महापुरुषः परमः पुरुषस्तथा ॥ १२ ॥

Line no. 12 = सर्वपुण्याधिकफलः (67) ‘Sarwa-punyaadhik-phal’—The Lord (Sri Ram) embodies all the greatest of rewards/fruits (‘Phal’) obtainable by doing things that are righteous, auspicious and proper (known as ‘Punya’). [‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Punya’ = holy, auspicious and righteous deeds; ‘Aadhik’ = Punya etc., the highest or the best of results that can be obtained by doing the best kind of Punya and all such other acts and deeds that are good and right; ‘Phal’ = fruit, reward, result, consequences.]

स्मृतसर्वाघनाशनः । (68) ‘Smrit-sarwaaghanaashan’—The Lord (Sri Ram) whose mere remembrance can destroy or eliminate all the gravest or densest of sins and their attendant greatest of misfortunes and punishment. [‘Smrit’ = to remember, invoke; ‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Ghan’ = dense, grave; ‘Naashan’ = destroy, eliminate.]

आदिपुरुषो (69) ‘Aadi-purush’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the primary and the most ancient Male (cosmic Lord) of creation. [It is from this ‘Aadi Purush’ that the rest of the creation has come into being. He is also called the ‘Viraat Purush’—the Lord who is as vast as the creation, and who is all-pervading and all-encompassing in this creation. There was nothing before the Aadi Purush. ‘Aadi’ = from the beginning, primary, primordial, ancient, initial, commencement of creation; ‘Purush’ = Male.]

महापुरुषः (70) ‘Mahaa-purush’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is great, exalted and a majestic Being (literally a Male—a ‘Purush’, but implying the entire spectrum of the living world). [‘Mahaa’ = great; ‘Purush’ = Male.]

परमः पुरुषस्तथा ॥ (71) ‘Param-purush’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Supreme Being. [‘Param’ = supreme and most exalted; ‘Purush’ = Male.]

पुण्योदयो महासारः पुराणपुरुषोत्तमः । स्मितवक्त्रो मितभाषी पूर्वभाषी च राघवः ॥ १३ ॥

Line no. 13 = पुण्योदयो (72) ‘Punyo-dayo’—The Lord (Sri Ram) inspires or motivates goodness and auspicious virtues to arise, emerge, grow, develop and bloom. [‘Punya’ = auspiciousness and virtuousness; ‘Udaya’ = to rise, emerge.]

महासारः (73) ‘Mahaa-saar’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the greatest and the only essence of creation; the Lord is the only truthful principle of creation; the Lord is the essence of all spiritual pursuit and the teaching of the scriptures; the Lord is the essence of creation

without which the creation would lose its meaning and existence; the Lord is the essence of all the teachings of the scriptures without which all these teachings would be meaningless. ['Mahaa' = great; 'Saar' = essence.]

पुराणपुरुषोत्तमः । (74) 'Puraan-purushottam'—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is lauded, applauded, praised, recognised and honoured as being the most ancient Being, and as being the best amongst all the Gods mentioned in the Purans. (b) The Purans have recognised that the Lord is the best amongst all the Males (living beings) in this creation. [The term 'Purshottam' is usually employed to mean the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu whose incarnation is Lord Ram. The word 'Puran' has two meanings—one of course means ancient, and the other means a group of ancient scriptures narrating mythological history. Therefore, both the above interpretations can be made. 'Purhottam' means 'the best amongst all Males'. Since all the 'Gods' are also males, and they are all supernatural Beings who are superior to the human beings, it follows that Lord Ram is best amongst all these Gods also.]

स्मितवक्त्रो (75) 'Smit-vaktro'—The Lord (Sri Ram) always has a sweet, pleasant and endearing smile on his lips. [The Lord is very dear and pleasing to look at, and he is always cheerful, warm and welcoming. 'Smit' = sweet smile; 'Vaktra' = mouth.]

मितभाषी (76) 'Mit-bhaashi'—The Lord (Sri Ram) speaks little, moderately, and only when required. ['Mit' = moderate, sparingly, little; 'Bhaashi' = one who speaks, speaker.]

पूर्वभाषी (77) 'Purva-bhaashi'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the most ancient speaker (as he is the Supreme Being before whom no one spoke anything—simply because there was no creation and a speaker before him). ['Purva' = first, before, preceding; 'Bhaashi' = speaker.]

च राघवः ॥ (78) 'Raaghav'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had taken a birth in the clan/dynasty of king Raghu (of Ayodhya).

अनन्तगुणगम्भीरो धीरोदात्तगुणोत्तरः । मायामानुषचारित्रो महादेवाभिपूजितः ॥ १४ ॥

Line no. 14 = अनन्तगुणगम्भीरो (79) 'Anant-guna-gambhiro'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has measureless and countless virtues and qualities that are profound and great. He is tranquil, calm, serious, sober and earnest. [In spite of the Lord possessing great and profound good virtues, he is not showing them off or boasting of them. The Lord is not haughty or arrogant or egoist that he has such exemplary qualities in him. 'Anant' = without an end; 'Guna' = virtues and qualities; 'Gambhir' = dense, profound, serious, sober, tranquil and calm.]

धीरोदात्तगुणोत्तरः । (80) 'Dhiro-daata-gunottar'—The Lord (Sri Ram) possesses the grand virtues of steadiness, patience, courage and fortitude ('Dhir'), is a liberal, charitable and magnanimous donor ('Daata'), and is beyond the tainting effects of the various Gunas (qualities—'Gunottar').

मायामानुषचारित्रो (81) 'Maayaa-maanush-chaaritro'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had assumed the illusionary form of a human being, and behaved like one. [To treat Lord Ram as an ordinary human being is therefore wrong, as this form is only an illusionary form created by the delusion-creating powers—called 'Maya'—of the Supreme Being who has no

forms. 'Maya' = delusions, illusions; 'Maanush' = man, human being, 'Chaaritra' = deeds done, life and character.]

महादेवाभिपूजितः ॥ (82) 'Mahaa-devaa-bhipujita'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is worshipped by the greatest of Gods; the Lord is worshipped by Lord Shiva known as Mahaa-deva. ['Mahaa' = great and most exalted; 'Devaa' = God; 'Maha-dev' = Lord Shiva who occupies an exalted position amongst the pantheon of Gods as he is regarded as very wise, enlightened and self-realised; 'Pujita' = worshipped.]

सेतुकृज्जितवारीशः सर्वतीर्थमयो हरिः । श्यामाङ्गः सुन्दरः शूरः पीतवासा धनुर्धरः ॥ १५ ॥

Line no. 15 = सेतुकृज्जितवारीशः (83) 'Setu-krit'—The Lord (Sri Ram) built a bridge (over the ocean to cross over to Lanka). ['Setu' = bridge; 'Krit' = a deed or action.]

(84) 'Jit-vaarish'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had conquered the Lord of rain (ocean). ['Jit' = to win, conquer, vanquish; 'Vaarish' = Lord of rain. The ocean is the 'Lord of rain' because it is from the ocean that the clouds derive their quota of rain. The water of the ocean evaporates due to the heat of the sun, and when this reaches higher atmosphere it cools down and condenses in the form of clouds. Without the ocean there will be no rain-bearing clouds simply because there will be no reservoir as large and vast and endless as the ocean to supply the clouds with their extraordinary large requirement of water molecules.]

{It will be pertinent to note here that we must read these two names together in order to make sense of them. These names refer to the event when Lord Ram had constructed the bridge over the ocean to reach Lanka to kill the fierce demons and retrieve Sita held captive by their king Ravana. The patron god of the ocean, Vaarish, would not give the Lord a passage inspite of the Lord's earnest pleadings. So finally the Lord drew his bow and arrow to dry up the ocean. Then the ocean became terrified, and conceded to the Lord request. Thus the bridge was built by the Lord. This bridge symbolically implied the Lord's victory over the ocean which was a formidable and horrifying obstacle to be overcome.

Now the meaning of the two names would become clear. They mean that—'The Lord tamed the ocean by constructing a bridge over it. The Lord overcame the formidable barrier created by the ocean that prevented him from crossing over to Lanka by constructing a bridge across it. The Lord literally became victorious by winning the war ('Jit') of attrition with the ocean ('Vaarish'), which was stubborn and not allowing the Lord to cross over it so as to reach Lanka, by his magical deed or act ('Krit') of constructing a bridge ('Setu') across it (the ocean). }

सर्वतीर्थमयो (85) 'Sarwa-tirtha-mayo'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is an embodiment of all the holy pilgrim sites. The holy form of the Lord is equivalent to the holiness of all the pilgrim places taken together. [That is, the Lord is as holy as any holy site independently or all the holy sites taken together. Thus, if one takes refuge at the holy feet of Lord Ram, then he is deemed to have gone to a great religious place. All the goodness and spiritual welfare and benefits that can accrue to a person by visiting holy pilgrim places are also

available to him if he takes refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram. ‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Tirtha’ = pilgrim sites; ‘Mayo’ = like, equivalent to.]

हरिः । (86) ‘Hari’—The Lord (Sri Ram) steals or takes away (all the vices, negative qualities, sins, evil, misfortunes and the like from his devotees so that they do not have to suffer their consequences). [‘Hari’ is a term applied to Lord Vishnu. It literally means one who steals. But it does not mean that the Supreme Lord steals valuables and material things from men; he is not a ‘thief’ or a ‘thug’. The Lord takes away vices and the like from his devotees so that they are rendered pure and holy.]

श्यामाङ्गः (87) ‘Shyaamaang’—The Lord (Sri Ram) has a form that is dark-complexioned. [The Lord has a dark-complexioned body like that of a rain-bearing cloud or that of the dark-blue sky. This colour has a metaphoric and symbolic significance. Lord Vishnu is the Supreme Being who is as vast, infinite, fathomless, formless, all-encompassing and all-pervading as the sky. He is the sustainer and protector of life in this creation like the rain which is like the nectar of life for the earth. The earth and all its life would parch to death if there was no rain. So this allusion to the colour of the rain-bearing cloud and the sky is used when referring to the complexion of the Lord. ‘Shyaam’ = dark, black, deep-blue, purple; ‘Ang’ = parts of the body.]

सुन्दरः (88) ‘Sundar’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is beautiful and charming.

शूरः (89) ‘Shur’ (pronounced as ‘Shoor’ as in *shoe* + *moor*)—The Lord (Sri Ram) is brave, valiant and courageous.

पीतवासा (90) ‘Peet-vaasa’—The Lord (Sri Ram) wears a yellow coloured cloth called the Pitambar. [‘Peet’ = yellow; ‘Vaasa’ = cloth used to wrap the body.]

धनुर्धरः ॥ (91) ‘Dhanur-dhar’—The Lord (Sri Ram) holds a bow. [See name no. 42 also. ‘Dhanur’ = bow; ‘Dhar’ = to hold.]

सर्वयज्ञाधिपो यज्ञो जरामरणवर्जितः ॥ शिवलिङ्गप्रतिष्ठाता सर्वाघगणवर्जितः ॥ १६ ॥

Line no. 16 = सर्वयज्ञाधिपो (92) ‘Sarwa-yagyaadhip’—The Lord (Sri Ram) presides over all fire sacrifices and other religious rituals. The Lord is the Supreme Deity to whom all the sacrifices are made and offerings meant for. [‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Yagya’ = fire and other religious sacrifices; ‘Dhip’ = presiding Lord or deity.]

यज्ञो (93) ‘Yagyo’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is himself a personified form of the fire sacrifice and other religious rituals. The Lord is as holy and pure as the sacrifice itself.

जरामरणवर्जितः ॥ (94) ‘Jaraa-maran-varjit’—The Lord (Sri Ram) does not become old, does not suffer from old age related problems such as the degeneration of the body, and he does not die. [This is simply because the Lord is eternal and imperishable. ‘Jaraa’ = old age; ‘Maran’ = death; ‘Varjit’ = is immune from, is prevented from.]

शिवलिङ्गप्रतिष्ठाता (95) ‘Shiv-linga-pratishthaata’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had established and consecrated the Shiva Lingam (a symbol of Shiva). [This refers to the Shiva Lingam that Lord Ram had established before crossing the ocean to Lanka. This ‘Shiva Lingam’ is called ‘Rameshwaram’ after Lord Ram. It has to meanings—‘the Lord, Ishwar, of Ram—i.e. Lord Shiva whom Sri Ram himself worshipped’, and ‘the Lord (Shiva) whose Ishwar

(Lord God) is none else but Sri Ram—i.e. Lord Shiva himself worships Lord Sri Ram'. 'Shiva-linga' = a symbol or idol of Shiva; 'Pratisthaata' = one who establishes.]

सर्वाघगणवर्जितः ॥ (96) 'Sarwaaghagana-varjit'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is absolutely free from any kind of inauspiciousness, negativity, vices, sin and evil etc., no matter how grave and overbearing they may be. All such bad and lowly qualities in this creation, even of the most potent kind, are prevented from tainting the Lord in any way. He is immune from their influence and negative effects. ['Sarwa' = all; 'Agha' = sins and negativity; 'Ghan' = density of quality; 'Varjit' = prevented, immune, prohibited.]

परमात्मा परं ब्रह्म सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः । परं ज्योतिः परं धाम पराकाशः परात्परः ॥ १७ ॥

Line no. 17 = परमात्मा (97) 'Pamaatma'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Soul, the Supreme Being, and the Supreme Lord God of creation. He is the transcendental Atma or the transcendental Being. ['Par' = supreme and transcendental; 'Atma' = soul.]

परं ब्रह्म (98) 'Param Brahm'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Supreme Being in this creation who is known as 'Brahm'. [The word 'Brahm' refers to the cosmic Consciousness and also as Pranav and OM. Brahm is uniform, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and supreme universal Truth of existence. Everything has come into being from Brahm and would finally merge into Brahm. This term is used extensively in the Upanishads to imply the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmaatma or the Supreme Being.]

सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः । (99) 'Sacchidaanand-vigraha'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a personified form or image (Vigraha) of 'truth' (Satya), 'consciousness and enlightenment' (Chid), and their attendant 'bliss' (Anand). ['Saccha' = true; 'Chid' = consciousness; 'Anand' = bliss; 'Vigraha' = image, form, idol.]

परं ज्योतिः (100) 'Param-jyoti'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is an embodiment of supreme light; the Lord is the 'supreme source of light' that illuminates everything in this creation. [The word 'Param' implies something that is supreme, the most magnificent, the highest and the best. The word 'Jyoti' means 'light'. Therefore the meaning is that the Lord is the supreme source of all knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that illuminates the world by removing the darkness of ignorance. It is a metaphoric term to also mean a supreme entity that injects life (represented by light) into the otherwise lifeless world (represented by darkness).]

परं धाम (101) 'Param-dhaam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the ultimate destination and abode for the soul of the creature; he is the final destination where all those who want to go to heaven reach; he is the final resting place for the entire creation and its creatures. ['Param' = supreme; 'Dhaam' = abode.]

पराकाशः (102) 'Paraa-kaash'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is like the transcendental space of the great sky element—i.e. he is like the deep recesses of the cosmos or the sky ('Akash') which is vast, fathomless, without any attributes, taintless, uncorrupt, all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-including. ['Paraa' = transcendental; 'Akaash' = sky.]

परात्परः ॥ (103) ‘Paraatpar’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is transcendental and supreme. The Lord is beyond the reach and purview of the perception of the sense organs as well as of the mind and the intellect.

परेशः पारगः पारः सर्वभूतात्मकः शिवः । इति श्रीरामचन्द्रस्य नाम्नामष्टोत्तरं शतम् ॥ १८ ॥

गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं देवि तव स्नेहात् प्रकीर्तितम् ॥ १९ ॥ (पद्म० उत्तर० २८१। ३०-४८)

Line no. 18 = परेशः (104) ‘Paresh’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the supreme Lord. The Lord Sri Ram is the supreme and the best ruler. [‘Par’ = supreme and transcendental; ‘Ish’ = lord.]

पारगः (105) ‘Paarag’—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) helps all the creatures to cross this world of transmigration and delusions. (b) The Lord helps everyone to cross the ocean of miseries, sins and misfortunes.

पारः (106) ‘Paar’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is transcendental and established beyond everything else in this creation.

सर्वभूतात्मकः (107) ‘Sarwa-bhutaatmak’—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Atma (soul; the consciousness) that lives in the bosom of all living creatures. The Lord has revealed himself as the Atma of all living beings. All mortal creatures are a form of the Lord. The mortal living beings are different images of the same Lord who has revealed himself in all their forms. (b) The Lord is revealed in the form of all the primary elements of creation known as the Bhuts; he is the essence of these elements. [The mortal creatures are called ‘Bhut’ because they are mortal, are subject to death, and are not the truth of creation like the phantom or the ghost which are illusionary by nature and have no real existence. The other meaning of the term ‘Bhut’ is the element. There are said to be five primary elements in creation from which the rest of the visible creation was moulded by the supreme Creator. These elements are sky, air, water, fire and earth. All living beings have their gross physical body made out of these five elements. ‘Sarwa’ = all; ‘Bhut’ = ghost, phantom, primary elements of creation, mortal living beings; ‘Bhutaatmak’ = in the form of the Atma or soul or consciousness or essence or the fundamental basis of these Bhuts.]

शिवः । (108) ‘Shiv’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is holy, beautiful, truthful, eternal, enlightened, wise, and consciousness personified. [The word ‘Shiva’ pertains to all these eclectic virtues at once.]

Line no. 18-19: Lord Shiva said to Parvati—‘So concludes the one hundred divine Names of Lord Ramchandra. Goddess (Parvati), these are very esoteric, mystical and enigmatic by nature, but out of my affection for you I have divulged them to you.’

[Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 281, verse nos. 30-48.]

Then Lord Shiva told Parvati that anyone who devotedly does Japa with these names, or remembers them, is liberated from the bad effects of countless sins that he may have

committed in as many countless previous lives. And therefore he becomes eligible for obtaining emancipation and salvation.

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108 Divine Names of Lord Ram according to Anand Ramayan

The 108 divine Names of Lord Ram have also been enumerated in the Anand Ramayan, Purva Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 32-51.

The occasion was Lord Ram's ascend to heaven after completing his time on earth. At that time Lord Shiva had prayed to the Lord with 108 divine and holy Names of the Lord. The Anand Ramayan is purported to have been written by sage Valmiki, the author of the other well-known story of the Lord known simply as the Ramayana.

This hymn is called 'Ram Shat-Naam Stotra' meaning a hymn (Stotra) consisting of a hundred names (Shat-naam) of Lord Ram. Now, we will read these names of the Lord and see what they mean, one by one.

श्रीरामशतनामस्तोत्र

शम्भुरुवाच

राघवं करुणाकरं भवनाशनं दुरितापहम् । माधवं खगगामिनं जलरूपिणं परमेश्वरम् ॥ १ ॥

Line no. 1— राघवं (1) 'Raaghavam'—Lord Sri Ram who took birth in the clan/dynasty of king Raghu (of Ayodhya).

करुणाकरं (2) 'Karunakaram'—Lord Sri Ram is merciful and compassionate.

भवनाशनं (3) 'Bhav-naashanam'—Lord Sri Ram destroys the world of delusions. ['Bhav' = the world of delusions; 'Naashnam' = one who destroys.]

दुरितापहम् । (4) 'Duritaapaham'—Lord Sri Ram devours sins and evils swiftly, along with the torments and miseries created by them. ['Durit' = quickly; 'Taap' = torments created by sins.]

माधवं (5) 'Maadhavam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) who is known as Maadhav. ['Maadhav' is an epithet for Lord Vishnu. It commemorates the slaying of the demon named Madhu by the Lord. The legend associated with this killing is that two demons named Madhu and Kaitav had tried to kill Brahma, the creator. Then Lord Vishnu had fought and killed them. This story appears in Devi-bhaagwat Puran, 1.4.9.]

खगगामिनं (6) 'Khag-gaaminam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) who travels astride the bird (known as Garud—the legendary heron or eagle). [This refers to Lord Vishnu who rides on Garud. 'Khag' = bird; 'Gaamin' = to travel.]

जलरूपिणं (7) 'Jalrupinam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) who is established in the form of the water. [This implies that the life-giving water possesses this quality because the Lord is present in it in a subtle form. Left to its own account water is a gross element. But the fact that it harbours life and is the nectar of life is due to the subtle presence of the Supreme Being in it. The Lord imparts the water its life sustaining and fostering capabilities. 'Jal' = water; 'Rupinam' = in the form of.]

परमेश्वरम् (8) 'Parmeshwaram'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Supreme Lord. ['Param' = supreme; 'Ishwar' = Lord.] ॥ १ ॥

पालकं जनतारकं भवहारकं रिपुमारकम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ २ ॥

Line no. 2— पालकं (9) 'Palakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the sustainer, protector and nourisher of this creation.

जनतारकं (10) 'Jantaarakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) provides liberation and deliverance to the living beings who are subjects of his creation. The Lord helps the creature to get across this ocean-like world of transmigration and delusions. ['Jan' = public, common man, subjects of a kingdom; 'Taarak' = one who takes across, one who gives freedom from bondage and the entangling web of this world.]

भवहारकं (11) 'Bhavahaarakam' —The Lord (Sri Ram) removes all the spiritual fetters or hurdles created by this world of delusions and transmigration of soul, a world which is like a web of birth and death along with their attendant troubles and miseries. ['Bhava' = the world of delusions and transmigration; 'Haarakam' = one who removes or eliminates.]

रिपुमारकम् । (12) 'Ripumaarkam'—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) kills or crushes one's enemies. [Here meaning that the Lord Sri Ram removes all sources of torments, horrors and miseries that terrify his devotees or those who seek shelter with him. 'Ripu' = enemy; 'Maarakam' = one who kills.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं (13) 'Twaam Bhaje Jagdishwaram'—Oh Lord (Sri Ram), I worship, revere, adore, honour, pray and pay my obeisance to you who are the Lord God of the entire world (creation). ['Twam' = you; 'Bhaje' = worship, pray, adore, pay obeisance; 'Jagdishwar' = Lord of the world.]

नररूपिणं (14) 'Nar-rupinam'—The Lord (i.e. the Supreme Being known by the name of Sri Ram) is in the form of a human being. ['Nar' = man, human being; 'Rupinam' = in the form of.]

रघुनन्दनम् (15) 'Rahunandanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is born as a son in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty (of Ayodhya). ['Raghu' = an ancient of the kingdom of Ayodhya; 'Nandanam' = a son.] ॥ २ ॥

भूधवं वनमालिनं घनरूपिणं धरणीधरम् । श्रीहरिं त्रिगुणात्मकं तुलसीधवं मधुरस्वरम् ॥ ३ ॥

Line no. 3— भूधवं (16) ‘Bhudhavam’—He (Sri Ram) is the Lord (emperor; king) of the whole earth, and has sway over its realm. [‘Bhu’ = earth; ‘Dhavam’ = lord, owner.]
 वनमालिनं (17) ‘Vanmaalinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) wears a garland of flowers that is called the Vanmaala. [The Vanmaala is a garland worn by Vishnu which is made of flowers of the wild forest (Van). The flowers are of a wide variety with those of the Kadamba tree (*Nauclea cadamba*) being in the center or the dominant ones. Sometimes, marigold, daisy or xanthium flowers are shown as being used in this garland.]

According to the Atharva Veda tradition’s Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 40, the Vanmaala is a symbolic representation of the primary Maya (delusion creating powers of Brahm) which itself has no birth (because it is an integral part of Brahm which has no birth or beginning). This is why your (Brahma’s) mental-born sons (such as Sankaadi) call ‘Avidya’ (ignorance having its genesis in Maya or delusions) a form of garland around my neck.

This world is revealed from the Viraat Purush, the primary and primordial form of Vishnu. This world is characterized by a the dominance of ignorance that prevents the creature from being aware of the actual ‘truth’ of creation and his own ‘self’, thereby forcing him to remain trapped in this cycle of birth and death, and suffering from their accompanying horrors and agonies. This is due to the influence of Maya which acts like a millstone around the neck of the creature. Hence, the metaphor of the garland symbolizing Maya and Avidya around the neck of Vishnu is cited here because of the simple reason that the Viraat Purush has revealed himself as the creature, and Maya acts like a millstone that is worn like a garland around the neck of this creature.

The garland is also a metaphor for the stupendous responsibility that Lord Vishnu has as the care-taker, sustainer and protector of this creation created by Maya. This world is like a mill-stone around the Lord’s neck, a bridle or a throat-latch which he carries with pleasure and without complaining at all.

Since the world is such a beautiful and enchanting place for the reason that it is created by Maya, this garland is also depicted as being bewitchingly beautiful just like the fascinating world it has managed to create.

This world is created by Maya, the power of the Lord to conjure up an extremely fascinating world from nothing, something which is not the reality, and is therefore deluding for those who think it to be real. The magic is that the Lord manages to maintain a fine balance between the two—he helps the Maya to perpetrate this creation, and at the same time keeps tight leash on its vagaries.

The garland is like an honour bestowed upon the Lord to mark the fact that the Lord has most expertly, avidly, diligently and wisely taken good care of the world with all its diversities and incongruities created by Maya, without ever complaining or failing in his duties, but miraculously remaining free from the effects of delusions that this Maya creates in this world.

From the perspective of the creature, if he falls in the trap of the attractions of the fascinating world around him, a world created by Maya, he wears this symbolic garland of Maya around his own neck that would act as a heavy burden on his chest. On the other hand, if he is wise and erudite to remain detached from the world inspite of doing his assigned duties diligently, he would be like Lord Vishnu himself. The former type of

creature is trapped in this world of delusions, while the latter type is said to be spiritually liberated and delivered.]

घनरूपिणं (18) 'Ghan-rupinam'—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is a personified form or a treasury of all the greatest of virtues and glories. (b) The Lord (Sri Ram) has a form that is dark as the rain-bearing cloud. ['Ghan' = dense, concentrated, treasury; rain-bearing dark clouds; 'Rupinam' = having a form like it.]

धरणीधरम् । (19) 'Dharnidharam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the one who bears the burden of the earth; the Lord supports, protects and nourishes the earth and the entire gamut of life on it and inside it. ['Dharni' = earth; 'Dharanam' = one who holds.]

श्रीहरिं (20) 'Sri-Harim'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is none else but Lord Vishnu who is known as Sri Hari. [This is because the word 'Sri' refers to goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, who is the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, and the word 'Hari' relates to Lord Vishnu himself. The Lord is called 'Hari' because he literally steals or removes or snatches all the miseries, grief, pain, troubles and misfortunes of his devotees and followers, and makes them happy and free from worries.]

Another interpretation of the term 'Sri-Harim' is that Lord Ram has all the majesty, magnificence and glory that exist in this creation as the Supreme Lord of this world. At the same time, Lord Ram removes all the pain, misfortunes, miseries and grief of his devotees.]

त्रिगुणात्मकं (21) 'Trigunaatmakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) embodies all the three Gunas in this creation. [The three Gunas are Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. These 'Gunas' are the inherent qualities and virtues that are present in all the living beings in this creation, and they determine the character and nature of all individuals. Since this entire creation is a revelation of the same Supreme Being, since everything that exists has its origin in the Supreme Being, and since the Supreme Being pervades uniformly throughout this creation—it follows that these three Gunas are also a part of the Supreme Being known as Lord Sri Ram. It is through these three Gunas that the Supreme Being controls the functioning of the entire world.]

तुलसीधरं (22) 'Tulsidhavam'—He (Sri Ram) is the Lord (husband) of Tulsi. [It is the holy Basil plant which is regarded as very sacred by the followers of Lord Vishnu (i.e. the Vishnu cult called the Vaishnavs). Its botanical name is *Ocimum sanctum*. It is said to have been born out of the tears of bliss and happiness of Lord Vishnu at the time when the pitcher containing the Amrit, the ambrosia of bliss and eternity, had emerged from the ocean when the latter was churned by the gods and the demons. The leaves of this plant are used to sanctify food offered to Lord Vishnu, and the dried wood of the tree is used for fire sacrifices, during cremation rites and also for making beads of the prayer rosary. In a personified form, Tulsi is regarded as a goddess very dear to Vishnu.]

According to another legend, there was a demon named Jaalandhar who had a chaste wife named Brindaa. Lord Shiva had tried his best to kill him but failed due to the spiritual powers of his wife Brindaa. At that time Lord Vishnu had broken her vows of chastity by stratagem, and when Brindaa came to know about it she cursed Vishnu that he would become a stone. Vishnu accepted the curse with respect because he knew that Brindaa was immaculate and was not at fault, but it was necessary to violate her vows so that her cruel demon husband could be killed. So instead of counter-cursing or showing his wrath, Vishnu blessed her and said that even in his form as a stone he would still have the greatest of respect for her and keep her over his head as a token of this. Vishnu thus

became a stone known as ‘Shaligraam’ and Brindaa became the Tulsi plant whose leaves are always placed on the top of the Shaligraam to worship the Lord.

According to the Shiv Puran, Rudra Sanhita, Khanda 5 (Uddha Khanda), Cantos 36-40, there was a demon named Shankha-chud, and his chaste wife was called Tulsi. Lord Shiva as well as the great goddess of death Mahakaali had tried their best to slay this demon, but were unsuccessful. It was then that Lord Vishnu had made Tulsi fall from grace by some trick so that ultimately Shiva, as Rudra, was able to kill him. When Tulsi came to know about the trick played upon her by Vishnu, she cursed him to become a stone. Lord Shiva counter-cursed her that she would become a river known as ‘Gandaki’. But Lord Vishnu intervened and forgave her, and said that he willingly accepts her curse as well as her as his symbolic consort. So it happened that Vishnu became a stone known as ‘Shaaligram’ that is found in this river, and Tulsi became a tree that grew on its bank. The leaves of this ‘Tulsi’ tree is regarded as the only thing that is acceptable to Lord Shaaligram—a metaphoric way of saying that Lord Vishnu can only be pleased by the touch of Tulsi.]

मधुरस्वरम् (23) ‘Madhu-swaram’—The Lord (Sri Ram) has a sweet and pleasant voice and speech. He talks pleasantly and courteously. [‘Madhu’ = sweet; ‘Swaram’ = tone of voice.] ॥ ३ ॥

श्रीकरं शरणप्रदं मधुमारकं व्रजपालकम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ ४ ॥

Line no. 4— श्रीकरं (24) ‘Srikaram’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the one who provides or creates ‘Sri’—i.e. he is the Lord who bestows all prosperity and successes, as well as all the majesty, grand virtues and magnificent glories that are obtainable in this world. [‘Sri’ = worldly achievements, glory, majesty, prosperity and welfare; ‘Karam’ = one who does something or brings about some happening.]

शरणप्रदं (25) ‘Sharan-pradam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) gives or grants refuge and shelter as well as protection to all those who seek it in his holy feet. [‘Sharan’ = to seek shelter in holy feet; ‘Pradam’ = to grant or give.]

मधुमारकं (26) ‘Madhu-marakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed the demon named Madhu. [The legend associated with this killing is that two demons named Madhu and Kaitav had tried to kill Brahma, the creator. Then Lord Vishnu had fought and killed them. This story appears in Devi-bhaagwat Puran, 1.4.9. ‘Madhu’ = name of a demon; ‘Marakam’ = one who killed.]

व्रजपालकम् । (27) ‘Vraj-paalakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had protected and taken care of the residents of Vraj (Brindaavan). [This refer to Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as Lord Krishna. The Lord had protected the residents of Brindaavan against the tyranny of Kansha. ‘Vraj’ = the place where Lord Krishna spent his childhood days; ‘Paalakam’ = the one who protects and sustains.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ‘Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam’—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 2.] ॥ ४ ॥

विठ्ठलं मथुरास्थितं रजकान्तकं गजमारकम् । सन्नुतं बकमारकं वृषघातकं तुरगार्दनम् ॥ ५॥

Line no. 5— विठ्ठलं (28) ‘Vitthalam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is also known as Vitthal. [Lord Vitthal, also known as Panduranga, is a form of Lord Vishnu that is worshipped in the south of India, especially in the south-western state of Maharashtra in a district known as Sholapur. This idol has its chief seat in a town by the name of Pandharapur. It is situated in the confluence of the two rivers Bhima and Chandrabhaga.

The image is depicted as standing on a brick, with the hands on the waist.

The legend associated with this form of the Lord is briefly as follows—Long ago, in a small village named Lohadandapur, a son was born to a Brahmin family. He was brought up well and married to a lovely and cultured girl, but was wayward in his behaviour. In order to constant reprimands from his parents, he separated from them and went away with his wife. Heartbroken, the parents decided to go on a pilgrim to Varanasi, the worldly abode of Lord Shiva. Hearing this, Pundalika Vitthal also decided to go to Varanasi. He hired a horse and traveled in comfort. En-route, he met his aged parents trudging on foot, but he ignored them.

It so happened that on the way he came to a hermitage of sage Kukkuta, and asked him the way to Varanasi. The sage neglected him. Pundalika was annoyed, and wandered around the hermitage when he saw three unkempt women entering the place and cleaning it with their open hairs. When they came out, they were transformed into well-groomed and radiant women. Awe-struck at this wonder, Pundalika asked them for an explanation. They said that they were personified forms of the three holy rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. They are constantly being polluted by sinful people taking a dip in them, and therefore once in a while they come here to get their purity restored. Asked how the sage gets this mystical power, the three women replied that it is because the sage serves his old parents with great devotion.

A thunderbolt literally struck Pundalika. He went in and prostrated before sage Kukkuta, and retraced his step to where his old parents were trudging towards Varanasi. Pundalika spent the rest of the years serving his parents with the greatest of love and devotion, taking them to pilgrim places and taking care of their needs with the greatest of diligence.

Lord Narayan (Vishnu) was very pleased with his devotion for his parents, and one day he decided to visit his home to see personally how he serves his parents. When the Lord came, Pundalika was busy serving his parents, and he did not pay much attention to the Lord except to gesture him to be seated on a slab of stone. The Lord however was extremely pleased, and he watched in fascination how Pundalika was going about his duties. The Lord was smiling, and his hands were on his waist as he watched.

It is believed that Lord Narayan was so transfixed with this show of love by Pundalika that he became meditative, and forever became immobile—like a ‘stone’. Since the Lord had manifested himself because of Pundalika, the latter’s name was added to the name of Lord Narayan.

The word ‘Panduranga’ in Marathi means ‘white’ though Lord Vishnu is known to have a dark complexion like that of a rain-bearing cloud or that of the sky, as also the fact that the image is also made of dark black stone. The reason is that ‘white’ is a colour of purity and holiness, as well as that of Sata Guna, the best of the three Gunas.

Another reason is that it is believed that earlier Lord Shiva was worshipped here, and since Shiva smears the ash of the fire sacrifice on his body because he is depicted as an ascetic, the complexion of his body is 'white' or grey like that of the ash.

The word 'Vit' in Marathi language spoken in that part of India means 'a brick', and 'Tthala' means 'to stand'. Therefore, the Lord who stands on a brick, and is immobile like a stone, is called 'Vitthal'.

Vitthal is also said to incorporate all the three gods of the Trinity—Brahma the creator who is represented by the word 'Vi' derived from 'Vidhi'—the god who decides destiny, 'Ttha' for Lord Shiva who is also known as *Neelkantha*, the Lord with a blue-purple neck, and 'La' referring to Lord Vishnu who is the husband of *Laxmi*, the goddess of prosperity and wealth.

The combined name of this revelation of Lord Vishnu thus came to be known as 'Pandulika Vitthal'.

There is a legend behind the brick too. Earlier, when the king of gods, Indra, has killed the demon Vrittasur with his weapon known as Vajra, the demon cursed him to become a stone. Indra rushed to Lord Vishnu to do something to save him. The Lord told him that the curse cannot be avoided, but Indra should go to Pandharpur and become a brick there till the time the Lord would come personally to provide him liberation from this curse by the touch of the dust of his holy feet. It was the same brick that Pundalika had offered to Lord Narayan to be seated. Thus, with the touch of Lord Vishnu's holy feet, Indra was freed from his curse.

Now a question arises, why this form of the Lord is called 'Panduranga' which means white.]

मथुरास्थितं (29) 'Mathura-sthitam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is established in Mathura. [Mathura is a holy place like Ayodhya where Lord Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu in the Dwapar Yug (era) that followed that of Lord Ram in the Treta Yug, did his worldly deeds. This holy name shows that both Lord Krishna and Lord Ram are the same, only they were born in different eras. 'Mathura' = a city associated with Lord Krishna; 'Sthitham' = to be established in.]

रजकान्तकं (30) 'Rajkaantakam'—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) is the slayer of the haughty Rajak (in his incarnation as Lord Krishna). [The story of Rajak is related to Lord Krishna, and it appears in Vishnu Puran, Khanda or Ansha no. 5, Canto no. 19, verse nos. 14-17. It says that when Lord Krishna went to Mathura on the invitation of Kansha, its cruel ruler, the Lord met Rajak. The latter was very haughty because of his friendliness with Kansha. By profession he used to colour clothes. When Lord Krishna and his elder brother Balraam asked Rajak for clothes that were coloured blue and yellow, Rajak rebuked them and said many unwarranted things. The Lord became infuriated and hit him hard with his open palms. This resulted in breaking Rajak's head from his neck, and he died. The Lord then snatched two pieces of cloth, one coloured blue and the other yellow, from him. Baalram wore the blue coloured cloth and Lord Krishna the yellow one. 'Rajak' = the name of a person who was very haughty and dear of Kansha, the cruel ruler of Mathura; 'Antakaam' = one who brings about an end.]

(b) The Lord (Sri Ram) is as glorious, splendourous, brilliant and shining as the brilliant white colour of silver. That is, the Lord possesses all the best of virtues, and is most holy and pure because the colour 'white' is a representative colour of these grand and noble qualities. ['Rajat' = silver; 'Kaanta' = radiance (as white as silver).]

(c) The Lord (Sri Ram) is as splendorous and radiant as light; the Lord removes darkness with the light of his presence. The word 'light' here also means the illumination provided by knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment which removes the darkness of ignorance and delusions. ['Raja' = light, illumination; 'Kaantakam' = one who does or provides something, or brings into effect.]

गजमारकम् । (31) 'Gaja-maarakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had slayed the elephant known as Gaja (in his incarnation as Lord Krishna). ['Gaja' = the elephant; 'Marakam' = one who killed.]

This story relates to Lord Krishna. This event is narrated in great detail in Bhagvat Maha-puran, as well as in Vishnu Puran, Khand no. 5, Canto 20, verse nos. 22-23, 30-44.

Lord Krishna and his elder brother Balraam had killed a wild and intoxicated elephant known as Kuvalyaapid especially sent by Kansha to kill Krishna and his brother Balraam when the two brothers were coming to attend the ceremony of the bow to be held at the royal pavilion of Kansha, the cruel and tyrannical ruler of Mathura. The Lord had, however, broken this bow earlier (verse nos. 15-17).

This elephant had the strength of Erawat, the royal elephant of Indra, the king of gods. It was standing guard at the gate of the royal pavilion, and it attacked the Lord as he came to the gate. Krishna yanked its left tusk with his right hand, and used it to shatter the head of its tamer, the Mahout. Meanwhile, Balraam broke the elephant's right tusk and used it as a battering ram to kill other Mahouts standing nearby. Finally, Balraam jumped and kicked the elephant viciously on its head, thereby killing it on the spot.]

सन्नुतं (32) 'Sannutam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is praised, revered, adored, worshipped and honoured by those who are exalted, honourable and high. The Lord possesses the best of virtues and glories. The Lord is most exalted, the best and supreme. ['Uttam' = best; 'Sannutam' = to have qualities that are best, to be exalted and high.]

बकमारकं (33) 'Bakamaarkam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed the Bak. [The term 'Bak' has two meanings—one is a demon named Bakaasur, and the other is demon in the form of a crane. The word 'Maarakam' means the killer of this demon.]

The story associated with this demon is briefly as follows—(a) Bakaasur was a demon who lived near the small town of Ekacakranagar. He used to kill the residents of this town. So they reached an agreement with him that one human being would voluntarily go to him with other eatables, but the demons should not kill at random. When the Pandavas came to live here during their forest exile, they came to know of this curse, and Bhima, the strongest of the Pandava brothers, killed this demon. This rid the town of its menace. This story is narrated in Mahabharata, Aadiparva, 163.

(b) The demon Bak in the form of a crane—this story is mentioned in Bhagvata Maha Puran, Skanda 10, Canto 11, verse nos. 46-51. He was killed by Lord Krishna. It so happened that one day Lord Krishna, his brother Balraam and other companions had gone to a large water body to quench their own thirst as well as of their cows and calves. When they were in the process of drinking water, a great demon named Bakaasur, who lived in the water as a huge crane, immediately lunged forward and gulped down Krishna. When the Lord entered the demon's mouth, he began to scorch his palate and inner throat as if they were on fire. The demon became terrified and vomited Krishna out, but rushed forward to kill him. Then Lord Krishna caught hold of the demon's beaks and tore it apart just like one tears a reed into two pieces.]

वृषघातकं (34) ‘Vrish-ghaatakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed the demon named Vrish or Vrish-bhaasur (in his incarnation as Lord Krishna). [‘Vrish’ = a bison; ‘Ghaatakam’ = a killer; the Lord who killed this demon.]

Vrishbhaasur, the bison-shaped demon, was killed by Lord Krishna. This story is mentioned in Vishnu Puran, Khand or Ansha 5, Canto 14, verse nos. 1-14. This demon was in the form of a wild bison who had once come to Vrindavan, causing terror amongst the humble cowherd community. They appealed to Lord Krishna. The Lord challenged him, yelling and clapping loudly to divert the demon’s attention towards himself. The bison rushed towards Krishna, pointing his horns at the Lord. Krishna stood like a rock, and caught hold of the demon by the horns and punched him in his abdomen with his bent knee. Then Krishna twisted and turned around the demon’s neck as one wrings a piece of wet cloth to squeeze out the water from it. Then, the Lord yanked out a horn and attacked the demon with it. The demon vomited blood and died instantly.]

तुर्गादनम् (35) ‘Turgaadanam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) who had killed the demon named Turga (a donkey). [‘Turga’ = a demon in the form of a horse or a donkey; ‘Danam’ = to vanquish; to subdue, to trounce.]

Dhenukaasur or Turgaasur—The word ‘Dhenu’ or ‘Turga’ mean a donkey or a horse. Hence, this demon (Asur) was in the form of wild donkey or a horse. Lord Krishna had killed him. This story is narrated in Bhagvat Maha Puran, Skandha 10, Canto 15, verse nos. 20-40, and Vishnu Puran, Khanda or Ansha 5, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-13. Briefly it says that there was a forest of rich coconut trees. A demon in the form of a donkey or a horse lived in it. He used to destroy the fruits and create unnecessary havoc in this forest. Once, Lord Krishna and his elder brother Balraam came there. The two brothers wished to eat the ripe fruits of the coconut trees, and so Balraam fell some of them. The demon heard the sound and charged at them. He kicked Balraam with his two hind legs on his chest. Balraam caught hold of the demon with these legs and swung him around. Then he dashed him on a sturdy coconut tree, thereby killing him. All other companions of this demon who came to help him met the same fate.] ॥ ५ ॥

नन्दजं वसुदेवजं बलियज्ञं सुरपालकम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ ६ ॥

Line no. 6—नन्दजं (36) ‘Nandajam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) who became the son of Nanda. [This refers to Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as Lord Krishna. Addressing Lord Ram as Lord Krishna is to establish uniformity between these two incarnations of Lord Vishnu. The story goes that after Lord Krishna was born to Devki inside the cell of a prison of Kansha, the cruel ruler of Mathura, his worldly father, Vasudev, had taken the infant Krishna and gave him to Nanda who was the chief of the cowherd community of Gokul in Vrindavan. His wife was Yashoda who brought up Lord Krishna as her own son. This story is narrated in Bhagvat Maha Puran, Skanda 10, Canto 3, verse nos. 47-54, and in Canto 5, verse no. 23-27, as well as in Vishnu Puran, Khanda or Ansha 5, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-23. ‘Nanda’ = the name of the chief of the cowherd community of Vrindavan; ‘Nandan’ = a son.]

वसुदेवजं (37) ‘Vasudevajam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) who was born as the son of Vasudeo. [This refers to Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as Lord Krishna. Addressing Lord Ram as Lord

Krishna is to establish uniformity between these two incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Vasudeo was married to Devaki, the sister of Kansha who was the tyrannical ruler of Mathura. Vasudeo and Devaki had prayed to Lord Vishnu in an earlier life that they want to have the Lord as their son. So Lord Vishnu incarnated as Lord Krishna to become the son of the couple. But as it happened, Kansha was cursed that the eighth son of Devaki would be his killer, so he threw them in jail and started killing all the children born to the couple. It was in this prison cell that Krishna revealed himself to the couple. ‘Vasudeo’ was the son of king Shur of Mathura, and he was married to Devaki, the sister of Kansha who was the son of Ugrasen of the Bhoj dynasty. This story is narrated in Bhagvat Maha Puran, Skanda 10, Canto 1 to 3; and in Vishnu Puran, Khanda or Ansha 5, Cantos 1 to 3.] बलियज्ञं (38) ‘Bali-yagya-gam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) who had gone to attend the fire sacrifice of king Bali. [This refers to Lord Vaaman who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a dwarf mendicant. He had gone to attend the fire sacrifice held by Bali, and had measured the entire creation in his two steps, while the third was placed on Bali’s head, thereby subduing him. This name again establishes that all the incarnations of Lord Vishnu have the same importance and significance. ‘Bali’ = a great king who was renowned for his charities; ‘Yagya’ = fire sacrifice; ‘Gam’ = to go.]

The legend of this incarnation is briefly as follows— This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. When Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a ‘Vaaman’ or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali’s own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali. He put his third step on Bali’s head and pushed the latter to the nether world. Hence, Vishnu is also called ‘Trivikram’—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps. But the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice done to a magnanimous Bali who had been righteous and firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitments. So, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gatekeeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.]

सुरपालकम् । (39) ‘Surpaalakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the sustainer, protector and well-wisher of the Gods. [‘Sur’ = gods; ‘Palakam’ = one who sustains and protects.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्--‘Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam’—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 4.] ॥ ६ ॥

केशवं कपिवेष्टितं कपिमारकं मृगमर्दिनम् । सुन्दरं द्विजपालकं दितिजार्दनं दनुजार्दनम् ॥ ७ ॥

Line no. 7— केशवं (40) ‘Keshavam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is also known as Keshav. [This name is used for Lord Vishnu as well as for Lord Krishna. The use of this name for Lord Ram implies that there is no difference between the two forms of Lord Vishnu as Ram and Krishna. The Tripadvibhūt Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 7, paragraph no. 18 says that Keshav, or Lord Vishnu, has twenty-four Vyūhas or forms. These 24 forms are the different incarnations, called the ‘Avtaars’, of Lord Vishnu. There are said to be ten chief ones and fourteen minor ones. The ten main ones = Matsya (Fish), Kurma (Tortoise), Varāaha (Boar), Nrisingh (half man and half lion), Vāmaan (Dwarf), Balraam, Ram, Krishna, Buddha, Kalki. The fourteen minor ones = such as sage Sankaadi, Kapil, Narad, Veda Vyas, Dattatreya, Nar-Narayan, Rishavdeo, King Prithu, Dhanvantri, Mohini, Hayagriva, Hans, Yagya or fire sacrifice, and Hari who blessed the child devotee Dhruv = total 24 Avtaars.]

कपिवेष्टितं (41) ‘Kapiveshtitam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) was surrounded by the monkeys. [The monkey army had surrounded the Lord from all sides throughout the Lanka campaign. ‘Kapi’ = monkeys; ‘Aaveshtita’ = to surround, to cover.]

कपिमारकं (42) ‘Kapi-marakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) who had killed the monkey (named Vaali, the elder brother of Sugriv). [Vaali was the elder brother of Sugriv and the king of the monkey race. He had thrashed his younger brother Sugriv due to some misunderstanding and threw him out of the kingdom, thereby usurping his share and right to the throne of Kishkindha, the capital of the kingdom of monkeys. Not only this, Vaali had also kept Sugriv’s lawful wife as his mistress, a deed which is totally unethical. Lord Ram had slayed Vaali when Sugriv complained of the injustice that was done to him by his own brother.]

मृगमर्दिनम् । (43) ‘Mrig-mardinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed the deer. [This relates to the slaying of the demon Marich who was forced by the demon king Ravana to become a decoy golden deer so that he could steal Sita from the forest hermitage of Lord Ram. Ravana was instigated by his sister Supernakha who was earlier deformed by Lord Ram by getting her nose and ears cut when she tried to lure the Lord with her lascivious gestures. This stealing of Sita set the stage for the grand war of Lanka when the whole of the evil demon race was annihilated by Lord Ram so that Sita could be rescued from Ravana’s clutches. ‘Mrig’ = deer; ‘Mardinam’ = one who killed.]

सुन्दरं (44) ‘Sundaram’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is beautiful and enchanting. [‘Sundar’ = beautiful. The word does not only mean physical beauty but also beauty of the eclectic virtues, noble character and superior knowledge that the Lord exemplified. Everything about the Lord was beautiful and magnificent and most charming.]

द्विजपालकं (45) ‘Dwijpaalakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a sustainer, protector, care-taker and well-wisher of the Brahmins (the learned and the upper class in the society). [‘Dwij’ = a Brhahmin; ‘Paalakam’ = one who takes care of someone else.]

दितिजार्दनं (46) ‘Diti-jaardanam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the killer and eliminator, or the crusher and vanquisher of the demons and other evil creatures who are the sons of Diti. [‘Diti’ = the mother of demons; ‘Jaardanam’ = the one who kills, vanquishes, crushes or subdues the sons of Diti.]

दनुजार्दनम् (47) ‘Danujaadanam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the killer of demons. [‘Danuj’ = demons; ‘Jaardanam’ = the one who kills, vanquishes, crushes or subdues them.] ॥ ७ ॥

बालकं खरमर्दिनं ऋषिपूजितं मुनिचिन्तितम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ ८ ॥

Line no. 8— बालकं (48) ‘Baalakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had taken the form of a child when he revealed himself as a human being. [This refers to the birth of Lord Vishnu as Ram in the household of king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya of Ayodhya. ‘Baalak’ = a child.]

खरमर्दिनं (49) ‘Khar-mardinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had killed the demon named Khar. [‘Khar’ = a demon by this name; ‘Mardinam’ = a slayer or killer of.]

ऋषिपूजितं (50) ‘Rishi-poojitam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had been worshipped, adored and honoured by the Rishis. [‘Rishi’ = sages and seers; ‘Poojitam’ = worshipped by.]

मुनिचिन्तितम् । (51) ‘Muni-chintitam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) was the subject of regular contemplation, meditation and remembrance by the Munis. [‘Muni’ = sages and hermits; ‘Chintitam’ = constantly remembered by.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्-- ‘Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam’—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 6.] ॥ ८ ॥

शंकरं जलशायिनं कुशबालकं रथवाहनम् । सरयूनतं प्रियपुष्पकं प्रियभूसुरं लवबालकम् ॥ ९ ॥

Line no. 9— शंकरं (52) ‘Shankaram’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is known as ‘Shankar’—one who is truthful, beautiful, wise, enlightened, auspicious, holy and divine. [‘Shankar’ is a term usually used to mean Lord Shiva, but it is also an epithet that covers these virtues and characters. Therefore it is both a proper noun as well as an adjective.]

जलशायिनं (53) ‘Jalshaa-yinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) sleeps on the water. [This refers to Lord Vishnu’s cosmic form that is depicted in the Purans, the ancient texts, as lying reclining on a bed made of the coiled body of the celestial serpent known as Seshnath who floats on the surface of Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean of milk. ‘Jal’ = water; ‘Shaa-yinam’ = one who sleeps on.]

कुशबालकं (54) ‘Kush-baalakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had a son named Kush. [Kush was the elder son of Lord Ram, and he was born to Sita, the Lord’s divine consort, in the hermitage of sage Valmiki. His younger brother was named Lav. ‘Kush’ = name of Ram’s son; ‘Baalakam’ = a child.]

रथवाहनम् । (55) ‘Rath-vaahanam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) who rides on a chariot. [‘Rath’ = a chariot; ‘Vaahan’ = a vehicle.]

सरयूनतं (56) ‘Saryu-natam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is shown respect by the holy river Saryu who bows before him. [‘Saryu’ = the name of a river that flows north of Ayodhya; ‘Natam’ = to bow before.]

प्रियपुष्पकं (57) ‘Priya-pushpakam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is dear to Pushpak (the celestial vehicle of Kuber, the treasurer of the Gods). [The story goes that the demon Ravana had defeated Kuber and captured the treasury of the Gods. He had kept this plane, named Pushpak, in his captivity. When Lord Ram won the war and killed Ravana, it was this plane that the Lord used to come back to Ayodhya. Then the Lord allowed Pushpak to go

back to the heaven, thereby freeing it from its bondage. It ought to be remembered here that in ancient Hindu mythology, even such inanimate objects as the air-plane known as Pushpak are depicted in a personified form. The reason is that anything that lives in the heaven is supposed to be divine and holy, and therefore immortal as compared to the mortal creatures of this world on earth.

Since the Lord had provided the Pushpak its freedom, he became dear to the latter. 'Priya' = dear; 'Pushpakam' = the air-plane of Kuber that was held captive by Ravana.]

प्रियभूसुरं (58) 'Priya-bhusuram'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is dear to the 'Bhusurs', the gods or the lords of the earth. [This term 'Bhusur' refers to the Brahmin class which is regarded as the most exalted amongst the human race. They are honoured as being equivalent to the Gods in the heaven. 'Priya' = dear; 'Bhu' = earth; 'Sur' = the gods.]

लवबालकम् (59) 'Lav-baalakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had a child (son) named Lav. [Lav was the younger brother of Kush. 'Lav' = the name of the second son of Ram; 'Baalakam' = a child.] ॥ ९ ॥

श्रीधरं मधुसूदनं भरताग्रजं गरुडध्वजम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ १० ॥

Line no. 10— श्रीधरं (59) 'Sri-dharam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) literally bears or holds Sri (Laxmi, the patron goddess of prosperity and well-being, and the divine consort of Vishnu) on his chest or bosom. That is, Sri or goddess Laxmi is very dear to the cosmic Lord known as Vishnu. ['Sri' = Laxmi; 'Dharam' = to place, to establish, to put.]

मधुसूदनं (60) 'Madhu-sudanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the killer of the demon Madhu. [This refers to Lord Vishnu killing the demon named Madhu along with another demon named Kaitav. Therefore the Lord is known as Maadhav as well as Madhusudan. See line no. 1, name no. 5. 'Madhu' = the name of a demon; 'Sudanam' = the killer or slayer.]

भरताग्रजं (61) 'Bharataa-grajam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the elder brother of Bharat. [Lord Ram were four brothers—Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. Ram was the eldest, followed by Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan who was the youngest. 'Bharat' = the younger brother of Ram; 'Agraj' = elder brother.]

गरुडध्वजम् । (62) 'Garud-dhwajam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has Garud sitting on his flag, or the royal flag of the Lord has the sign of Garud marked on it. [This clearly refers to Lord Vishnu whose mount is Garud, the celestial heron or eagle. Lord Vishnu's flag has the form—a sign— of Garud embroidered on it, much like a sign that the flags of kings and emperors have that are exclusive to them and help to identify them. Garud is also shown as sitting on the Lord's flag. Garud is also the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, and is regarded as swift as the mind in its movement—i.e. it can go anywhere at will in the shortest time possible. 'Garud' = the mount of Vishnu; 'Dhwaj' = flag.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्-- 'Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam'—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 8.] ॥ १० ॥

गोप्रियं गुरुपुत्रदं वदतां वरं करुणानिधिम् । भक्तपं जनतोषदं सुरपूजितं श्रुतिभिः स्तुतम् ॥ ११ ॥

Line no. 11— गोप्रियं (63) ‘Gopriyam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) was dear to the cows, or he loved the cows (in his incarnation as Lord Krishna). [Once again, as often in this hymn, Lord Ram and Lord Krishna are treated as one, because these two incarnations were the only two main forms that Lord Vishnu had taken as a human. ‘Go’ = cow in Sanskrit or Hindi; ‘Priyam’ = to be dear of.]

गुरुपुत्रदं (64) ‘Guru-putradam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) had given his Guru (teacher) his son back. [This again relates to Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as Lord Krishna. The Lord was taught by Saandipani. When the education was complete, the Lord asked his Guru to ask for anything as a gift in return for giving his knowledge. The teacher was learned, and he did not want anything in return, but his wife requested Krishna that if he is really interested in giving some sort of gift then he should bring their dead son back to them. So Krishna went to the nether world but could not find their son. Then he went to the heaven and found him in the custody of Yam, the god of death. Krishna then brought the son and gave him to his teacher Saandipani. This incident is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Puran, Skandha 10, Purvaardha, Canto 45, verse nos. 31-48. ‘Guru’ = a teacher; ‘Putra’ = a son; ‘Dam’ = to give.]

वदतां वरं (65) ‘Vadataam Varam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the greatest giver of boons and the best speaker or orator. [‘Vadataam’ = a speaker; ‘Varam’ = the senior most; a boon.]

करुणानिधिम् । (66) ‘Karunaa-nidhim’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a treasury of mercy, compassion, benevolence and grace. [‘Karuna’= mercy, compassion; ‘Nidhi’ = a treasury, a source of something great.]

भक्तपं (67) ‘Bhaktapam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a protector of devotees. [‘Bhakta’ = devotee; ‘Tapam’ = miseries and torments.]

जनतोषदं (68) ‘Jantoshadam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the one who gives or grants contentedness and satisfaction to his subjects and dependants. [‘Jana’ = subjects, dependants; ‘Tosh’ = satisfaction, contentedness; ‘Danam’ = to give, grant.]

सुरपूजितं (69) ‘Sur-pujitam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is worshipped, adored, honoured and respected by the Gods. [‘Sur’= gods; ‘Pujitam’ = is worshipped by.]

श्रुतिभिः स्तुतम् (70) ‘Srutibhi Stutam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is lauded and honoured by the Vedas (the ancient scriptures. [‘Sruti’ = the Vedas; ‘Stutam’ = honoured and adored.] ॥

११ ॥

भुक्तिदं जनमुक्तिदं जनरञ्जनं नृपनन्दनम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ १२ ॥

Line no. 12— भुक्तिदं (71) ‘Bhuktidam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a giver of all comforts and sufferings (according to the creature’s deeds). [Being the Supreme Lord of creation, it is he who decides the degree and extent of reward in the way of pleasures and comfort that a creature is eligible to get by the virtue of the good deeds done by it, or a punishment by the way of sufferings and pains for the evil deeds. ‘Bhukti’ = to suffer or enjoy; ‘Dam’ = a giver.]

जनमुक्तिदं (72) 'Janmuktidam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a giver of Mukti (liberation and deliverance to the soul of the living being) to the living being who is the subject of the kingdom of the Lord. [Being the Supreme Lord of creation, he grants emancipation and salvation to the creature; it is the Lord who can provide the creature with freedom from the horrors of this world and its endless cycle of birth and death along with their attendant problems and torments. 'Jana' = subjects, followers, dependants; 'Mukti' = liberation and deliverance; 'Dam' = giver.]

जनरञ्जनं (73) 'Jana-ranjanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a giver of happiness and joy to his subjects and followers. ['Jana' = subjects, followers, dependants; 'Ranjan' = happiness and joy.]

नृपनन्दनम् । (74) 'Nrip-nandanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) became a son of the king (Dasrath of Ayodhya). [In his previous life, Dasrath was a king named Manu. He is regarded as the first male amongst the human race. He and his wife Satrupa had prayed to Lord Vishnu that they want the Lord as their son. It was this boon that resulted in Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to become a son of Dasrath. In this incarnation, Vishnu was known as 'Ram'. 'Nrip' = king; 'Nandanam' = a son.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्-- 'Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam'—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 10.] ॥ १२ ॥

चिद्धनं चिरजीविनं मणिमालिनं वरदोन्मुखम् । श्रीधरं धृतिदायकं बलवर्धनं गतिदायकम् ॥ १३ ॥

Line no. 13— चिद्धनं (75) 'Chddhanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is pure cosmic Consciousness personified. ['Chidda' = consciousness; 'Dhanam' = a treasury, fount, source, dense.]

चिरजीविनं (76) 'Chir-jivanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is an eternal life; the Lord has an infinitely long life. ['Chir' = long-lasting, infinite, eternal, always; 'Jivanam' = life.]

मणिमालिनं (77) 'Mani-maalinam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) wears a garland or a necklace of priceless gems. ['Mani' = gem; 'Maala' = garland or necklace.]

वरदोन्मुखम् । (78) 'Varandomukham'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is ever eager and ready to grant auspicious boons and gifts (to his followers and devotees who are righteous and holy). ['Var' = boons and grants; 'Unmukham' = ready, eager, inclined to do or give.]

श्रीधरं (79) 'Sridharam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) bears the sign of the Srivatsa on his chest. [This is the mark of the foot of sage Bhrigu which he had caste on the chest of Vishnu ones when he got annoyed upon the Lord. The Lord is so enamoured of his devotees that instead of taking umbrage at this disrespect shown by the sage and punishing him for his misdemeanor, he had blessed the sage that his footprint would always remain on his chest as one of the jewels worn by Lord Vishnu. However, Laxmi was so angry at the temerity of sage Brighu that she cursed that henceforth she, in the form of wealth and material abundance, would always shun a Brahmin; it is believed that this is the reason why Brahmins, who are otherwise of a high birth, are always serving others in the society who are junior to them by birth for their monetary needs. Refer Atharva Veda's Gopal Uttar

Tapini Upanishad, verse nos. 30 and 35. 'Sri' = the sign of the Srivatsa; 'Dharam' = to bear.]

धृतिदायकं (80) 'Dhriti-daayakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a giver of Dhriti, also known as 'Dhairya'—i.e. the virtues of patience, courage, fortitude and forbearance. [That is, the Lord empowers the person who is devoted to the Lord and seeks the Lord's support to develop the grand virtues of patience and courage as well as fortitude and forbearance which helps him to overcome all the problems of life with calmness and poise. Such a man is never disturbed or agitated mentally and emotionally, and he is able to maintain his balance and composure. 'Dhrit' = courage, patience, fortitude and forbearance; 'Daayakam' = giver or bestower of something.]

बलवर्धनं (81) 'Bal-varadhanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) enhances strength and valour (of his devotees and followers, as well as those who are righteous and holy). The Lord encourages those who are good and righteous by enhancing their strength to cope with adversities and evil. ['Bal' = force, strength; 'Vardhanam' = to increase.]

गतिदायकम् (82) 'Gati-daayakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) gives the creature his ultimate destination in the form of rest for his soul and its emancipation and salvation. This is called 'Gati' or final destination. It also means that the Lord provides the world (i.e. its creature and the elements) the power of movement and the ability to keep the momentum. ['Gati' = the ultimate destination; speed and swiftness of movement; 'Daayakam' = giver.] ॥ १३ ॥

शान्तिदं जनतारकं शरधारिणं गजगामिनम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ १४ ॥

Line no. 14— शान्तिदं (83) 'Shantidam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a giver of peace, tranquility and solace to the creature and his soul. ['Shanti' = peace; 'Dam' = giver.]

जनतारकं (84) 'Jan-tarakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the one who takes the subjects of his kingdom (living beings, followers, devotees and dependants) across the formidable barrier represented by this world of transmigration, a world of delusions and endless cycle of birth and death along with its attendant miseries and torments. The Lord helps his subjects to overcome all spiritual hurdles and takes them to cross the vast ocean represented by the countless problems and horrors of this world. ['Jana' = subjects, dependants, followers; 'Tarakam' = one who takes across a formidable barrier.]

शरधारिणं (85) 'Shar-dhaarinam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) holds an arrow (in his hands). ['Shar' = arrow; 'Dhaarinam' = to hold.]

गजगामिनम् । (86) 'Gaj-gaminam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) had rushed forward or gone swiftly to save the elephant known as the Gaj. [This relates to an incident when Lord Vishnu had gone to save an elephant who was being pulled in the water by a crocodile. The elephant had tried all his might to save himself, but failed. When he was just about to completely drown in the water, he broke a lotus from the surrounding water and offered the flower as his last offering to the Lord. The Lord then rushed to save his devotee, the elephant. The Lord not only pulled him out of the water but cut off the head of the crocodile with his Chakra, the circular saw-like invincible weapon of Lord Vishnu. 'Gaja' = an elephant; 'Gaaminum' = to go.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्-- 'Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam'—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 12.] ॥ १४॥

शार्ङ्गिणं कमलाननं कमलादृशं पदपङ्कजम् । श्यामलं रविभासुरं शशिसौख्यदं करुणार्णवम् ॥ १५॥

Line no. 15— शार्ङ्गिणं (87) 'Shaangrinam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) holds a bow known as Shaarang. [This is the bow held by Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of creation. It symbolizes the cosmic senses of the Viraat Purush. This bow of Lord Vishnu is also known as the *Shaankhya Dhanush* (bow). It was made from the bones of demon named Shaankhya-chuda after he was killed by Lord Shiva. According to Krishna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 23, the Shaarang bow of Lord Vishnu stands for the Vaishnavi Maya which is the primary form of Maya closely associated with Vishnu. The Atharva Veda's Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 38 says that this Shaarang bow represents the Maya of the Supreme Being.]

कमलाननं (88) 'Kamalaa-nanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has eyes like the lotus flower. ['Kamal' = lotus; 'Nanam' = eyes.]

कमलादृशं (89) 'Kamalaa-drisham'—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) looks as beautiful and untainted as the lotus flower. (b) The Lord (Ram as Vishnu) keeps his sight on Kamalaa, goddess Laxmi, his divine consort. ['Kamal' = lotus; 'Kamalaa' = goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu; 'Drisham' = seen, observed.]

पदपङ्कजम् । (90) 'Pad-pankajam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has lotus like feet. ['Pad' = feet; 'Pankaj' = lotus.]

श्यामलं (91) 'Shyaamalam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) has a dark complexion. ['Shyaamal' = dark complexion.]

रविभासुरं (92) 'Ravi-bhaasuram'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is as splendid, radiant and glorious as the brilliant Sun. ['Ravi' = sun; 'Bhaasuram' = splendour and brilliance.]

शशिसौख्यदं (93) 'Shashi-saukhya-dam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is like the Moon that is soothing, provides comfort and peace, as well as happiness and joy to the beholder. ['Shashi' = moon; 'Saukhya' = happiness and joy; 'Dam' = gives.]

करुणार्णवम् (94) 'Karunaa-rnavam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is an ocean of and a personified form of the glorious virtues of mercy, compassion and kindness. ['Karuna' = mercy; 'Varnam' = a personified form of.] ॥ १५॥

सत्पतिं नृपालकं नृपवन्दितं नृपतिप्रियम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ १६॥

Line no. 16— सत्पतिं (95) 'Satpatim'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is truly the supreme Lord of creation. He is the patron Lord of the grand virtue of Truth. ['Sat' = true, truth; 'Patim' = lord.]

नृपपालकं (96) 'Nrip-paalam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the sustainer, care-taker, protector and well-wisher of all the kings of this world. ['Nrip' = king; 'Paalam' = protector and sustainer.]

नृपवन्दितं (97) 'Nrip-vanditam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is adored, honoured and praised by all the kings. ['Nrip' = king; 'Vanditam' = praised and honoured by.]

नृपतिप्रियम् । (98) 'Nripati-priyam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is dear to all the kings in this world. ['Nrip' = king; 'Priyam' = dear.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्-- 'Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam'—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 14.] ॥ १६ ॥

निर्गुणं सगुणात्मकं नृपमण्डनं मतिवर्धनम् । अच्युतं पुरुषोत्तमं परमेष्ठिनं स्मितभाषिणम् ॥ १७ ॥

Line no. 17— निर्गुणं (99) 'Nirgunam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is without any attributes and definable qualities that may be limiting in their reach. [This is the cosmic and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. This form is infinite, indescribable, beyond the reach of the mind and the intellect, all-encompassing and universal. It takes the form of each single individual element and thing in this world because the entire creation is a revelation of the same Supreme Being. Nothing in existence is not one or the other form of this Supreme Being. therefore, no single word or quality or epithet or attribute would do justice to who the Lord actually is or the form in which he exists because each one of them has its own limitation but the Lord is limitless and infinite in meaning and form. The Lord, for instance, is like the sky or the air or the water which have no definitive shape of their own but take the shape of the container in which they are present. The water in a cup, a piece of ice and the ocean is the same element known as 'water' though there is a vast difference between them. 'Nirguna' = without any Gunas or qualities.]

सगुणात्मकं (100) 'Sagunaatmakam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is also with attributes and known qualities. [This relates to the known world that is visible. All things and creatures have a certain form, whether that form is miniscule like the atom or the single-celled creature such as the bacteria or amoeba, or like the colossus mountain, the tall trees or huge animals that roam the surface of earth, or even as the human being of myriad cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, language, beliefs etc. All of them are one or the other form of the same Supreme Lord. So the Lord has a given set of attributes and qualities in any given form in which the units of this creation exist. Therefore we say that the Lord has attributes. Even when the Supreme Lord himself took a birth as an incarnation, say for instance Lord Ram in our case, he had certain physical characteristics and personality traits. That is, he had some specific attributes and qualities that were specific to this form of Ram. Hence, the Supreme Being is 'Saguna' also. This is the great paradox of the Lord which makes him indefinable and beyond comprehension of the limited reach of the mind and the intellect—that he is 'Nirguna' as well as 'Saguna'. The word 'Saguna' means to have certain qualities and attributes.]

नृपमण्डनं (101) 'Nrip-mandanam'—The Lord (Sri Ram) is like the crown jewel and an ornament amongst the legend of kings and emperors who ever ruled this world. He is the

greatest of kings and emperors of this world. [That is, he has all the best qualities and character traits that one expects from a king or an emperor—such as for instance his nature of being merciful, compassionate, forgiving, graceful, law-abiding, caring, loving, benevolent, magnanimous, charitable, judicious and farsighted, as well as strong, valiant, powerful, dignified, honourable and taintless. ‘Nrip’ = king; ‘Mandanam’ = ornamental decoration.]

मतिवर्धनम् । (102) ‘Mati-varadhanam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) enhances one’s intellectual and mental refinement, prowess and abilities. The Lord blesses his devotees and followers with wisdom and intelligence. [Just like a student of a learned and expert teacher benefits from the teacher’s knowledge if the latter is kind to diligently teach his ward, the Lord also tries his best and ensures that those who rely upon him get the best of intellectual fruits that are available in this world. ‘Mati’ = mind; ‘Vardhan’ = to increase.]

अच्युतं (103) ‘Achutam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is steady, and he never can fall from his exalted and high stature. He is ever graceful, dignified, immaculate and beyond reproach. [‘Achut’ = that which does not fall.]

पुरुषोत्तमं (104) ‘Purshottam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the best, an excellent and the most exalted Male (‘Purush’) ever born on earth. [The term ‘Purush’ has a double meaning here—it means that in his incarnation as a human known as Lord Ram, the Supreme Being is the best amongst all the males ever born on earth, and as the cosmic Supreme Being he is the best amongst all the Gods of the heavens. ‘Purush’ = male; ‘Uttam’ = the best, excellent.]

परमेष्ठिनं (105) ‘Parmeshthinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Supreme Being known as Parmesthi. [‘Parmesthi’ = the Supreme Being who is almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.]

स्मितभाषिणम् (106) ‘Smit-bhaashinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) has a smiling face that is sweet and endearing. The Lord talks or speaks sweetly and in a pleasant voice that is friendly, welcoming and amiable. Whenever the Lord talks he always has a sweet smile on his lips. [‘Smit’ = smile that is sweet and pleasant; ‘Bhaashinam’ = to talk or speak.]॥

१७॥

ईश्वरं हनुमन्नुतं कमलाधिपं जनसाक्षिणम् । त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ १८ ॥

Line no. 18— ईश्वरं (107) ‘Ishwaram’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is indeed the Supreme Being and the Lord of the entire creation (‘Ishwar’).

हनुमन्नुतं (108) ‘Hanumannutam’—(a) The Lord (Sri Ram) makes Hanuman happy and elated. The Lord enhances the confidence and glory of Hanuman. (b) The Lord is praised, honoured and adored by Hanuman who bows reverentially before him. [Hanuman was the closest monkey devotee of the Lord. He was instrumental in finding Sita for Lord Ram, and in winning the war at Lanka. ‘Hanuman’ = the monkey friend and devotee of Lord Ram; ‘Unnat’ = to rise or increase; ‘Nuttam’ = to bow and adore someone.]

कमलाधिपं (109) ‘Kamlaa-dhipam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is the Lord (husband) of Kamlaa, the goddess Laxmi who is Lord Vishnu’s divine consort and the patron goddess of prosperity and wealth. [‘Kamlaa’ = Laxmi, so-called because she holds a lotus in her hands; ‘Dhipam’ = lord, king, husband.]

जनसाक्षिणम् । (110) ‘Jan-saakshinam’—The Lord (Sri Ram) is a neutral and universal witness for all the living beings of this creation, and for what they do and think. [Being the cosmic Soul of this creation, the Lord resides in the heart of all living beings, and therefore nothing is hidden from him or unknown to him. The Lord is omniscient and all-knowing, therefore he witnesses whatever a creature does externally and overtly, as well as what he thinks and feels inside his mind and heart internally. ‘Jan’ = subjects of the kingdom, the ordinary creature; ‘Saakshi’ = witness.]

त्वां भजे जगदीश्वरं नररूपिणं रघुनन्दनम्-- ‘Twam Bhaje Jadishwaram Nar-rupinam Raghunandanam’—I worship you, oh Lord (Sri Ram), who are the Lord of the world, is in the form of a human being, and are born in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty. [Refer line no. 16.] ॥ १८ ॥

[Note—The above stanzas, from no. 1 till no. 18, of this great devotional hymn dedicated to Lord Ram outline the Lord’s one hundred and ten names. Now, Lord Shiva tells Parvati the time when to say this hymn, and the spiritual and other rewards that augment to the devotee who uses this hymn to worship the Lord.]

ईश्वरोदितमेतदुत्तममादराच्छतनामकम् । यः पठेद् भुवि मानवस्तव भक्तिमांस्तपनोदये ॥ १९ ॥

Line no. 19— Lord Shiva said—‘Anyone on the surface of this earth who offers his worship to Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, by faithfully and devotionally reciting this hymn consisting of more than a hundred glorious and divine Names of the Lord every morning at the time of sunrise, will develop great faith, devotion and love for the Lord (Sri Ram).

त्वत्पदं निजबन्धुदारसुतैर्युतश्चिरमेत्य नः । सोऽस्तु ते पदसेवने बहुतत्परो मम वाक्यतः ॥ २० ॥
(आनन्दरामायण, पूर्णकाण्ड ६।३२-५१)

Line no. 20— Such a person would come to my (Lord Shiva’s) divine abode along with his kith and kin, his wife and sons etc., and would steadily serve the holy feet of the Lord (Sri Ram as the Supreme Being) for an infinitely long time to come.’

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Importance of the figure of 108

The number '108' is regarded as very auspicious because the total of its first digit '1' and the last digit '8' comes to '9', which is the last numeral and the highest basic figure or value. The numeral '9' is called the cardinal number as it is the highest amongst the primary list of numbers (from 1 to 9), and there is no number after it. It symbolically stands for the Supreme Being because there is nothing beyond the Supreme Being.

The miracle of 108 is that if we add the three numbers $1 + 0 + 8$ we get the number '9'. Apparently the '0' appears to have no value, but then 108 is not 'nine' but 'one *hundred* nine'. If we remove the '0', the remaining two digits, '1' and '8' together make the number '18' only, while merely placing the '0' in their middle enchances their value manifold. In other words, inspite of seeming to have no value of its own, the '0' makes the other two numbers enhanced in value a hundred times. Likewise, though Brahm is passive, it is Brahm that gives this creation its meaning, worth, and life.

There is another way of looking at the figure 108. The digit '0' represents the formless Brahm, the Supreme Being, who is central to this creation but is so formless and without any attributes of his own that it is like 'zero'. Brahm lends the creation all the worth it has just like the numeral '0' that has no value of its own but when added to any given number or numeral it enhances its value by ten times, by hundred times, by thousand times, and by millions and millions of times.

Brahm is the core or the center of this creation like the digit '0' in 108. Just as we lose the figure of 108 by removing the '0' from it, we lose this creation by removing Brahm from it.

The creation is envisioned as an 'egg' or a rounded ball. The numeral '0' is also shaped like an egg. The figure '1' placed before it indicates the beginning or the primary stage of creation, and the figure of '8' placed at the end indicates the maximum limit to which this creation can grow. As we have seen above, the numeral '8' is just one short of the cardinal number of '9'. Hence here it means that even the best and the highest form of life in this creation is not complete without Brahm represented by the '0'.

The entire creation—from the basic and rudimentary form symbolized by the number '1' to the highest form represented by the number '8'—has Brahm at the center like the hub of a wheel. The complete entity that is known as this creation has a beginning represented by the numeral '1', the most developed form represented by the numeral '8', with the 'Atma' at the center represented by the number '0'.

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Section-3/Part-3

In this Part 3 of Section 3 we shall read the many divine Mantras or hymns dedicated to Lord Ram that were composed by his great devotees.

These hymns are the following—(i) Ramashtak by sage Veda Vyas, (ii) Raghunath-ashtak, (iii) Sita-ram-ashtak, (iv) Sanat Kumar Sanhita's Ramstavaraj by sage Narad, (v) Ram Stotra by Jatau (the Bird), (vi) Ram Stotra by Indra (the king of Gods), (vii) Ram Stotra by Vibhishan (the noble demon king of Lanka), (viii) Ram Stuti (prayer) by Brahma (the creator), and (ix) Prayer: Skand Puran, Nagar Khand.

We shall take them up one by one. Hence, this addendum is divided into nine sections, each containing one such hymn.

Ram-Ashtak (by sage Veda Vyas)

These devotional hymns are called 'Ashtaks' because they have eight verses in all. These were composed by the great legendary sage Veda Vyas who had classified the Vedas into their present four volumes, had penned the eighteen Purans as well as authored the epic Mahabharat. His greatest contribution to the theme of devotion and worship of Lord Ram as the visible manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm is his magnum opus called 'Adhyatma Ramayan' (published separately by this humble author) which narrates the epic story of Lord Ram with special stress on the metaphysical and spiritual value of the story, which is of course expected from a prodigiously enlightened man who has worked on the Vedas and the Purans.

भजे विशेष—सुन्दरं समस्त—पाप—खण्डनम् । स्वभक्त—चित्त—रञ्जनं सदैव राममद्वयम् ॥१॥

1. I constantly, consistently and persistently worship, praise, honour and adore Lord Ram who is especially and most attractive and charming, enchanting and captivating (not only for his physical charms but for the eclectic, holy and divine virtues and qualities that he possesses), who is able to smash all the sins and misdeeds of his devotees (as well as the horrendous consequences of such sins and misdeeds), who is the one who gives immense joy and exhilaration to the mind and heart of his devotees, and who is unique, unparalleled and second to none (1).

जटा—कलाप—शोभितं समस्त—पाप—नाशकम् । स्वभक्त—भीति—भञ्जनं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥२॥

2. I remember and concentrate my thoughts on Lord Ram, and worship, revere and praise him who is adorned by a matted lock of hairs on his head, who is the destroyer of all the

sins, who provides fearlessness to his devotees, and who is unique, unparalleled and without a second (2).

निज—स्वरूप—बोधकं कृपाकरं भवापहम् । समं शिवं निरञ्जनं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥३॥

3. I remember and concentrate my thoughts on Lord Ram, and worship, revere and praise him who enlightens the creature about his true and essential form, who is the one who shows benevolence, mercy, kindness and compassion towards all, who is the one who helps to take one across the ocean-like world (of delusions and ignorance which leads the creature to fall in a muddle of miseries, torments and horrors of all kinds), who has equanimity as his natural temperament and is equitable and even towards all, who is known as 'Shiva' because he is the personification of truthfulness, welfare and auspiciousness, of renunciation and detachment, of wisdom and enlightenment, of peace, tranquility, happiness and bliss, and is the supreme Lord of the entire creation, who is known as 'Niranjana' (because he is the one having no defects, faults, taints, blemishes, shortcomings and scars of any kind; one who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure; one whose sublime, subtle, esoteric and mystical form is so microscopic and diffused that it cannot be seen by the naked eyes of the physical gross body, but which can only be perceived by the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment).

He is matchless, unique and unparalleled. I worship, honour and adore such a Lord Ram (3).

स—प्रपञ्च—कल्पितं ह्यनाम—रूप—वास्तवम् । निराकृतिं निरामयं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥४॥

4. He had assumed a human form, which is illusionary and not his true form, out of his own free will because he is without a name or form as he is attributeless and without any specific qualities that can be quantified and qualified. He is the essential reality and the absolute truth in creation. He is without a physical shape, specific form or delineable contour. He is healthy in the sense that he does not have any shortcomings, blemishes, taints and faults and is above reproach. The Lord is unique, unparalleled and without a second in every respect. I worship, honour and adore such a Lord Ram who possesses these eclectic qualities and virtues (4).

निष्प्रपञ्च—निर्विकल्प—निर्मलं निरामयम् । चिदेकरूप—सन्ततं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥५॥

5. He is without any 'Prapanch' (worldly deceptions, delusions, tricks, mischief, maverism, cunning, deceit, conceit, fraud, artificiality, illusions, imposterings, falsehoods and concealments).

He is 'Nirvikalp' (without an alternative and options). He is 'Nirmal' (pure, holy, immaculate, divine, uncorrupt and pristine). He is 'Niramaya' (one who is disease free in the sense that he is without the faults, shortcomings, flaws or blemishes associated with

this body or the world). He is 'Chid' personified (i.e. he is the personification of the pure consciousness in the form of the Atma or soul of the individual creature at the microcosmic level of creation as well as the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being at the macrocosmic level).

Along with other sages and seers, I worship, honour and adore such a Lord Ram who possesses these eclectic qualities and virtues (5).

भवाऽब्धि—पोत—रूपकं ह्यशेष—देह—कल्पितम् । गुणाकरं कृपाकरं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥६॥

6. He is like a ship to help one to cross over this ocean-like world. He has assumed this special body (of a human) which is an illusionary form of the Lord's true form (which is without any attributes and features). He is a treasury of all noble, auspicious and righteous virtues and qualities. He is most graceful, merciful, kind and compassionate.

I worship, honour and adore such a Lord Ram who possesses these eclectic qualities and virtues (6).

महा—सुवाक्य—बोधकैर्विराजमान—वाक्पदैः । परब्रह्म—व्यापकं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥७॥

7. He is known and understood in the form of the four great sayings of the scriptures (Vedas and Upanishads) called the 'Maha-vakyas' (i.e. whose true nature, form and essence is proclaimed, expounded, enunciated, elucidated, clarified and encapsulated in the form of the four great axioms and maxims of the scriptures). In fact, these sayings as well as all the other hymns and verses of the scriptures are personification of the Lord in as much as they showcase one or the other glorious and divine virtues of the Supreme Being.

He is the one who is all-pervading, all-incorporating, all-encompassing and omnipresent supreme, transcendental and most exalted Brahm who is unique, unmatched, unparalleled and without a second.

I worship, honour and adore such a Lord Ram who possesses these eclectic qualities and virtues (7).

शिवप्रदं सुखप्रदं भवच्छिदं भ्रमापहम् । विराजमानदैशिकं भजे ह राममद्वयम् ॥८॥

8. He is the bestower of well-being and auspiciousness as well as peace, tranquility, happiness and bliss to the creature. He is the one who can dismantle the net cast by ignorance and delusions in this ocean-like world which traps the creature in its never ending cycle of torments and miseries associated with death and birth. He is the one who dispels and eliminates all sorts of delusions, artificiality, doubts, confusions, misconceptions and vexations. He resides in an exalted abode which is holy and divine. He is unique, unmatched, unparalleled and without a second.

I worship, honour and adore such a Lord Ram who possesses these eclectic qualities and virtues (8).

फलश्रुतिः

रामाष्टकं पठति यः सुकरं सुपुण्यं व्यासेन भाषितमिदं शृणुते मनुष्यः ।

विद्यां श्रियं विपुल—सौख्यमनन्तकीर्तिं सम्प्राप्य देहविलये लभते च मोक्षम् ॥९॥

महर्षि—व्यासविरचितं रामाष्टकं सम्पूर्णम् ।

9. Benefits :- Those who read, recite or hear these auspicious eight-verse Stotra called ‘Ramashtak’ composed by Sage Veda Vyas, are blessed ones who are granted the boon of immense knowledge, expertise and skills, the boon of immense good fortune, wealth, prosperity and all round welfare, the boon of immense and eternal happiness, majesty, fame and glory as well as of successes and accomplishments in all their endeavours. Not only this, but these blessings go on increasing day by day for him. At the time of death, such persons attain the highest stature of attaining emancipation and salvation, called ‘Moksha’ of the Atma or soul, for themselves (9).

Thus ends ‘Ramashtak’ Stotra composed by Sage Veda Vyas.

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Raghunath-Ashtak

This devotional hymn narrates the divine story of Ramayan in eight verses.

शुनासीराधीशैरवनितलज्जप्तीडितगुणं प्रकृत्याऽज्जातं तपनकुलचण्डांशुमपरम् ।

सिते वृद्धिं ताराधिपतिमिव यन्तं निजगृहे स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥१॥

1. He who is unborn is reality but had taken a birth on the earth to honour the prayers of the Wind God, the Sun God, Indra and the other Gods, who is bestowed with prominent noble and virtuous qualities such as having immense amount of mercy, compassion, kindness, charity and magnanimity, who is essentially invisible and imperceptible but has revealed himself in a visible form having exceedingly brilliant light and splendorous radiance in the form of the Sun in the sky as well as an exalted member of the solar race, who grew up and regularly developed in the palace of his father at Ayodhya much like the moon during the bright lunar fortnight (when the shining disc of the moon increases with each passing day), and who is worshipped, honoured and revered by all the Gods—I bow most reverentially, devotionally and with joyous abandon before Raghunath (i.e. the Lord of the Raghu race; Lord Ram) along with his divine consort Sita. He is the best amongst the Gods and is worshipped by them also (1).

निहन्तारं शैवं धनुरिव इवेक्षुं नृपगणे पथि ज्याकृष्टेन प्रबलभृगुवर्यस्य शमनम् ।
विहारं गार्हस्थ्यं तदनु भजमानं सुविमलं स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥२॥

2. He (Lord Ram) is the one who had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva into three parts in front of all the assembled kings as if he was effortlessly breaking the 'Ikshudand' (the sugarcane stem), he had calmed down the furious anger of sage Parashuram who had intercepted him (i.e. the marriage party of Lord Ram while it was on its way back to Ayodhya after his marriage with Sita at Janakpur) with a bow stringed and ready (to avenge the breaking of Shiva's bow), and he had lived like a dutiful and righteous householder—I bow most reverentially, devotionally and cheerfully before such a Lord Ram along with Sita. He is the best amid the Gods and is worshipped by them as well (2).

गुरोराज्ञा नीत्वा वनमनुगतं दारसहितं ससौमित्रिं त्यक्त्वेप्सितमपि सुराणां नृपसुखम् ।
विरूपाद् राक्षस्याः प्रियविरहसन्तापमनसं ससीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥३॥

3. He had gone to the forest along with his wife (Sita) and the son of Sumitra (Laxman) after obtaining permission from his Guru (moral preceptor, sage Vashistha), thereby forsaking his right to the throne for the benefit of the Gods even though he had to abandon the comforts and pleasures of kingdom of a prosperous kingdom in the process.

There in the forest, he had deformed the demoness (named Supernakha by chopping-off her nose and ears), and had to suffer from the agony of separation from Sita (because she had been abducted by Ravana, the ten headed demon). I bow most reverentially, devotionally and cheerfully to Raghunath (Lord Ram) along with Sita. He is the best amongst all the Gods and is worshipped by them also (3).

विराधं स्वर्नीत्वा तदनु च कबन्धं सुररिपुं गतं पम्पातीरे पवनसुत—सम्मेलन—सुखम् ।
गतं किष्किन्धायां विदित—गुण—सुग्रीव—सचिवं स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥४॥

4. He had granted the unique privilege of having a residence in his supreme and divine abode to the demons Viradh and Kabandh who were enemies of the Gods. After that, he had gone to Lake Pampa and eventually met Hanuman. That meeting gave him immense pleasure. Then he went on to the kingdom of Kishkindha where his fame was established because he had installed Sugriv on its throne after killing (his elder brother) Vali. I most cheerfully, reverentially and devotionally bow before Lord Ram and Sita. He is the best amongst the Gods and worshipped by them as well (4).

प्रियाप्रेक्षोत्कण्ठं जलनिधिगतं वानरयुतं जले सेतुं बद्ध्वा—ऽसुरकुल—निहन्तारमनघम् ।

विशुद्धामर्धाङ्गीं हुतभुजि समीक्षन्तमचलं स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥५॥

5. He was eager to search out his beloved (Sita) and so went to the shore of the ocean. Helped by the monkey army, he had constructed the stone bridge across it and had eventually killed Ravana and others like him in the demon race (during the epic war at Lanka).

Thereafter, he had retrieved Sita who had been held captive by the demon, and after having established her purity by the purifying fire, he had accepted her.

I most cheerfully, devotionally and reverentially bow before Lord Ram and Sita. He is the best amongst the Gods and worshipped by them as well (5).

विमानं चारुह्याऽनुज—जनकजा—सेवितपद—मयोध्यायां गत्वा नृपपदमवाप्तारमजरम् ।
सुयज्ञैस्तृप्तारं निजमुखसुरान् शान्तमनसं स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥६॥

6. After that he had boarded the magnificent plane called ‘Pushpak’ along with his younger brother (Laxman), Janki (Sita) and others who had served him (i.e. the monkeys, bears and demons such as Sugriv, Jamvant and Vibhishan respectively). He went back to Ayodhya from Lanka.

There he was crowned a king. He performed many elaborate fire sacrifices to please and honour the Gods. He is of a calm, tranquil and peaceful temperament.

I most cheerfully, devotionally and reverentially bow before Lord Ram and Sita. He is the best amongst the Gods and worshipped by them as well (6).

प्रजां संस्थातारं विहित—निजधर्मे श्रुतिपथं सदाचारं वेदोदितमपि च कर्तारमखिलम् ।
नृषु प्रेमोद्रेकं निखिलमनुजानां हितकरं स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥७॥

7. He was the sustainer, protector and guardian of his subjects as well as was a steadfast follower of Dharma (righteousness) and the path sanctified and prescribed by the Vedas and other scriptures. He inspired all his subjects and followers to follow that path also. He infused love and compassion in all the creatures by his sterling example, and was a magnanimous, benevolent and benign benefactor of all human kind.

I most cheerfully, devotionally and reverentially bow before Lord Ram and Sita. He is the best amongst the Gods and worshipped by them as well (7).

तमःकीर्त्याशेषाः श्रवणगदनाभ्यां द्विजमुखास्तरिष्यन्ति ज्ञात्वा जगति खलु गन्तारमजनम् ।
अतस्तां संस्थाप्य स्वपुरमनुनेतारमखिलं स—सीतं सानन्दं प्रणत रघुनाथं सुरनुतम् ॥८॥

8. During the reign of Lord Ram, ‘Paap’ (i.e. evils, vices, sins, misdemeanors, perversions and misdeeds of all kinds) were not present at all— they were neither heard

of or observed anywhere. The Brahmins preached truthful knowledge and wisdom as enshrined in the scriptures, hearing of which the whole world became enlightened and eligible to get liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. All the subjects of Lord Ram achieved his divine abode (or, all the subjects had become so noble, virtuous, auspicious and righteous because of their constant interaction with Lord Ram, constant teachings of learned Brahmins, and constant diligence on their own part in following the tenets prescribed by the scriptures that Lord Ram sent all of them to his divine abode).

I most cheerfully, devotionally and reverentially bow before Lord Ram and Sita. He is the best amongst the Gods and worshipped by them as well (8).

फलश्रुतिः

रघुनाथाष्टकं हृद्यं रघुनाथेन निर्मितम् । पठता पापराशिघ्नं भुक्ति—मुक्ति—प्रदायकम् ॥९॥

रघुनाथाष्टकम् समाप्तं ॥

9. Benefits:- This Stotra called ‘Raghunathashtak’ has the potential to destroy— by the mere reading and recitation of it regularly—all the treasury of accumulated sins and evil deeds that the devotees of Lord Ram might have ever committed or indulged in, inadvertently or otherwise, as well as their horrible consequences. They enjoy the fruits of this world, and in the end (i.e. at the time of death) they attain the supreme state of emancipation and salvation of their souls (9).

Thus ends ‘Raghunathashtak’ Stotra.

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Sita-Ram Ashtak

This hymn praises the venerable Lord Ram along with his divine consort Sita as the one who extends all protection to his devotee. The person offering this prayer lauds the Lord’s reputation of accepting even the most downtrodden ones and giving them solace and succour. Marked by great devotion and submission for the Lord, this eight-verse hymn has four lines to each stanza.

ब्रह्म—महेन्द्र—सुरेन्द्र—मरुद्गण—रुद्र—मुनीन्द्रगणैरति सेव्यं
क्षीर—सरित्पति—तीरमुपेत्य नुतं हि सतामवितारमुदारम् ।
भूमिभर—प्रशमार्थ—मथ प्रथित—प्रकटीकृत—चिद्धन—मूर्ति
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥१॥

1. Oh Lord Ram! You are most magnanimous, graceful, benign and benevolent as well as a protector of good people. That is why Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Indra the king of Gods, Maruts who are the different forms of the Wind God, Rudra who is one of the forms of Lord Shiva, and sages and seers etc. honour, revere, adore, praise, worship and pay their obeisance to you on the shores of the legendary ocean of milk called the Kshir-sagar.

You had taken birth (i.e. had manifested) on the earth in the form of Lord Ram who followed the righteous and noble path called Dharma and was eternal bliss and enlightenment personified. You had manifested yourself to remove the burden of the earth (which it faced in the form of the demons that symbolised evil, vices, sins, wickedness, tyranny and cruelty).

Oh the treasury and fount of mercy, kindness and compassion! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (1).

पद्म—दलायत—लोचन हे रघुवंश—विभूषण देवदयालो!
निर्मल—नीरद—नीलतनोऽखिल—लोकहृदम्बुज—भासक भानो ।
कोमलगात्र—पवित्र—पदाब्ज—रजःकण—पावित—गीतमकान्तं
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥२॥

2. Oh Lord Ram! You are like a jewel (or an ornamentation) of the Raghu's race (of Ayodhya). Oh the merciful and compassionate Lord! Your eyes are large like the petals of the lotus flower, and your divine and holy body has a complexion resembling the dark hue of rain-bearing dark clouds. You are like the Sun for the development (or enhancement of the pleasure of) the lotus-like heart of the creatures of this world (i.e. your devotees in this world feel exhilarated and fulfilled when they remember you and have an opportunity to witness your love for them).

You have a tender body. You have purified and sanctified the river Saryu and have blessed it with divine powers by the virtue of the few specks of dust particles of your feet which you had washed in its waters as it passes by the city of Ayodhya during its course.

Oh venerable Raghunandan (literally, the son of the Raghu's race)! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (2).

पूर्ण परात्पर पालय मामति—दीनमनाथ—मनन्त—सुखाब्धे!
प्रावृडदध्र—तडित्—सुमनोहर—पीतवराम्बर राम! नमस्ते ।
काम—विभञ्जन—कान्ततरानन—काञ्चन—भूषण—रत्नकिरीटं
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥३॥

3. You are the complete, absolute, supreme and eternal Being; you are a measureless and fathomless ocean of bliss and happiness. Protect me who am most humble, miserable, distressed, wretched and lowly.

Oh venerable Lord Ram who wears a 'Pitambar' (a silk, seamless body wrapping garment worn by Lord Vishnu) which resembles the dazzle of lightening in dark clouds. I reverentially bow before you. You are a destroyer of Kamdeo-cupid (i.e. you vanquish and eliminate lust, passions, greed, amorous tendencies, licentiousness, promiscuity), have a most charming and attractive face/countenance, and you wear a golden crown studded with gems and jewels.

Oh a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (3).

दिव्य—शरच्छशिकान्ति—हरोज्ज्वल—मौक्तिक—माल—विशालसुमौले!
कोटि—रविप्रभ! चारुचरित्र—पवित्र—विचित्र—धनुःशरपाणे
चण्ड—महाभुज—दण्ड—विखण्डित—रक्षसराज—महागजदण्डं
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥४॥

4. You wear a crown and a necklace made up of a string of gems and pearls which are so magnificent that they put the radiance, majesty, splendour and glow of the beautiful moon-light during the nights of winter to shame. Your character and virtues are as glorious, majestic and splendid as millions of suns. You hold a magnificent and strange bow and arrow in your hands which resemble a massive baton held in your robust arms by which you had trounced and trampled the false pride, haughtiness and arrogance of the demon king (Ravana) even as a strong goad is able to pierce the head (temple) of a great and wild elephant and thereby subdue it.

Oh venerable Raghunandan (literally, the great son of the Raghu's race, i.e. Lord Ram)! Oh a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (4).

दोष—विहिंस्र—भुजङ्ग—सहस्र—सुरोष—महानल—कालकलापे
जन्म—जरा—मरणोर्मि—मनोमद—मन्मथ—नक्र—विचक्र—भवाब्धौ ।
दुःखनिधौ च चिरं पतितं कृपयाऽद्य समुद्धर राम ततो मां
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥५॥

5. In this fearsome and horrifying ocean-like world full of sorrows, miseries, troubles and tribulations, there are numerous wild and cruel creatures, thousands of poisonous dragons spewing venom in the form of wrathful fire of vengeance, there are swirling and ever changing swift currents representing birth, old age and death, there are terrible and horrifying alligators/crocodiles symbolising 'Kaam' (lust, passions, yearnings, greed,

desires, licentiousness, promiscuity etc.), and then there is the hallucinating and intoxicated 'Mana' or the mind-heart complex that creates such circumstances that the man begins to bloat and get puffed up due to such negative trait as 'Mada' (haughtiness, arrogance, pride, ego, hypocrisy etc.).

Oh Lord! I have fallen in such an awesome horrifying ocean of sorrows and miseries, fears and torments. I earnestly request you to liberate and deliver me from it.

Oh venerable Raghunandan (i.e. Lord Ram)! Oh a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (5).

संसृति-घोर-मदोत्कट-कुञ्जर-तृट्-क्षुद-नीरद-पिण्डित-तुण्डं
दण्डकरोन्मथितं च रजस्तम उन्मद-मोह-मदोज्झितमार्तम् ।
दीनमनन्यगतिं कृपणं शरणागतमाशु विमोचय मूढं
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥६॥

6. Even as a thirsty and hungry elephant, who has become wild, agitated and angry due to thirst and hunger, is forcefully brought under control by a goad, you must deliver me, who has sought shelter in your august, holy and divine feet, from the various torments that are constantly tormenting me and causing of much misery for me.

Some of the negative traits and worldly delusions that are causing immense amount of misery for me are the following--'Mada' (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy, pride and ego), 'Moha' (attachments, infatuations, delusions), 'Matsarya' (envy, jealousy, malice, ill-will), and other faults such as 'Raja' (passions, desires, yearnings, greed, selfishness, ambitions, stormy temperament etc. which are collectively called the 2nd quality of a creature) and 'Tama' (the most lowly behaviour producing inertia, sins, evils, vices, perversions etc.) which are associated with this world.

I am most ignorant, foolish, lowly and wretched (and not worthy for you), but I have come to seek refuge and shelter in your holy feet nevertheless (because I have heard of your promise to accept anyone who comes to you with sincere humility and submission). So, oh Raghunandan, have mercy on me.

Oh venerable Raghunandan (i.e. Lord Ram)! Oh a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion! Give me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (6).

जन्मशतार्जित-पाप-समन्वित-हृत्कमले पतिते पशुकल्पे
हे रघुवीर! महारणधीर! दयां कुरु मय्यतिमन्दमनीषे ।
त्वं जननी भगिनी च पिता मम तावदसि त्ववितापि कृपालो!
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥७॥

7. Due to the sins, evils and misdeeds and their integrated effects accumulated over hundreds of births, my heart has become depraved and degraded to the low level of an

animal (i.e. it has become pervert and low like an animal with animal-like instincts, devoid of wisdom and discrimination faculty to distinguish between what is good and what is bad), and I am really very foolish and stupid.

Oh Raghunandan, oh the valiant and steadfast one in the battle-field! Have mercy on me who am of a very low intellect and utterly stupid. You are my mother, my father, my sister and my protector. So, oh Raghunandan, have mercy on me.

Oh venerable Raghunandan (Lord Ram)! Oh a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (7).

त्वां तु दयालुमकिञ्चन—वत्सल—मुत्पल हारमपारमुदारं
राम विहाय कमन्यमनामयमीश! जनं शरणं ननु यायाम् ।
त्वत्पदपद्ममतः श्रितमेव मुदा खलु देव! सदाऽव ससीतम् ॥
त्वां भजतो रघुनन्दन! देहि दयाघन! मे स्वपदाम्बुजदास्यम् ॥८॥

8. You are most merciful, kind, gracious, compassionate, benevolent, benign and magnanimous towards the downtrodden underdogs and have-nots.

You wear a garland of lotus flowers, are most gracious and benign. Where shall I go except you who are unique in so many ways? [That is, where will I find someone who is so great, compassionate, merciful, kind, benevolent and magnanimous so as to take care of me who am so wretched, lowly, humble, ignorant and stupid.] Oh Lord! That is why I have taken refuge and shelter in your holy, divine and august feet. Oh Lord! I beseech you, along with Sita, to give me your protection. So, oh Raghunandan, have mercy on me.

Oh venerable Raghunandan (Lord Ram)! Oh a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion! Grant me a boon so that I can have sincere and steadfast devotion in your august and holy lotus-feet, and be able to worship and serve you diligently (8).

फलश्रुतिः

यः करुणामृत—सिन्धुरनाथ—जनोत्तमबन्धुरजोत्तमकारी
भक्तभयोर्मि—भवाऽब्धितरी—सरयू—तटिनीतट—चारु बिहारी ।
तस्य रघुप्रवरस्य निरन्तर—मष्टकमेतदनिष्टहरं वै
यस्तु पठेदमरःस नरो लभतेऽच्युतरामपदाऽम्बुजदास्यम् ॥९॥

सीतारामाष्टकं सम्पूर्णम् ।

9. Benefits :- You are like an ocean of nectar consisting of mercy, kindness, graciousness and compassion. You are a protector, helper and supporter of those who are lowly, distressed, humble and deprived. You are righteous and virtuous, are the remover of the fears and torments of your devotees which engulf them like currents and whirlpools in

river Saryu that suck anyone who they manage to trap. You roam on the banks of the river (watchfully looking for an opportunity to save someone who might be drowning in the river of sorrows and miseries represented by the swirling waters of the river), and are the senior most member of the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty.

You are a destroyer and eliminator of all the misfortunes and adverse circumstances faced by your devotees.

Anyone who reads and recites this 'Sita Ramashtak' Stotra with unwavering and unflinching devotion, humility, conviction and faith is able to attain immortality and become eligible to serve your holy, divine and august lotus-like feet forever (9).

Thus ends 'Sita Ramashtak' Stotra.

* __* __* __*

Sanat Kumar Sanhita's

Ram-Stavaraj (by sage Narad)

The devotional hymns known as 'Ram Stavaraj' dedicated to Lord Ram to pay glowing tributes to him have got their name from the fact that they are considered as the best hymn in praise of the Lord. The name has three parts—(a) 'Ram' referring to the patron deity for whom this particular hymn was composed, 'Stava' originating from the word 'Stavan' meaning to praise, to honour, to laud, to sing the glories of, an eulogy in honour of someone, to pray reverentially to a deity with the object of pleasing it and invoking its blessings, and (c) 'Raj' meaning the King or something that is the best and grandest amongst its likes. Therefore, these hymns composed by the celestial sage Narad in praise of Lord Ram are deemed to be the best and the most excellent of prayers offered by him to his Lord, Sri Ram.

Another pertinent point to note is that, as is usual in such compositions, there are a number of words which are generally used as adjectives and epithets to describe various qualities and virtues of the chosen subject, are repeated too often. This is the practice in vogue in compositions which are of the genre of prayers, perhaps to reaffirm one's statement that what is being said is indeed the truth, and at the same time to emphasize and reassert the gravity, the import, the truth, the importance and the significance of such statements. It is done to ensure that if the worshipper misses them at the first instance, repetition would ensure that these grand virtues of the Lord get firmly and indelibly ingrained in his mind so as to mould his notions, his thinking and approach towards that particular deity. They help to remove any iota of doubts or ambiguity in his mind about the potentials and powers, the divinity and holiness of the chosen deity, resulting in his being steady in the path of worship and faith. Repetition has a psychological effect too, and over time the person begins to believe in the authenticity, veracity and truthfulness of what is being said.

विनियोगः ॐ अस्य श्रीरामचन्द्रस्तवराजस्तोत्रमन्त्रस्य सनत्कुमार-ऋषिः, श्रीरामो देवता, अनुष्टुप्छन्दः, सीता बीजम्, हनुमान् शक्तिः, श्रीरामप्रीत्यर्थे जपे विनियोगः ।

This is the introductory verse called ‘Viniyog’¹ or invocation of the deity to be worshipped by using Mantras especially dedicated to it. This prayer describes the glory of Lord Ram Chandra, and finally asks the Lord to provide deliverance to the soul and free it from the worldly snare in which it finds itself trapped.

‘OM Salutations! This is the ‘Ramstavaraj Mantra’ dedicated to Lord Ram Chandra which has been culled from the ‘Sanatkumar Sanghita’ (a compendium of devotional hymns composed by the ancient sage Sanatkumar).

This Mantra was first visualized/conceptualized and given divine sanctity and proved to have esoteric and mystical powers and potentials by sage/seer Sanatkumar. Hence he is deemed to be its progenitor Rishi (i.e. the first person who has conceived this Mantra and realised that it had spiritual potentials).

Lord Lord Ram is the patron God who is worshipped by this Mantra; hence he is the ‘Devta’. The style of composition adopted for its composition is called ‘Anushtup Chanda’².

The Beej Mantra for Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram, is used as to worship the Lord and invoke his divine intercession with this hymn.

The enforcing authority who lends his astounding strength and powers to help those who say this Stotra (devotional hymn) and help them attain their goals is none other than Hanuman, the greatest devotee and follower of Lord Ram and who has taken upon himself the duty to fulfill all the desires of those who worship the Lord and protect them against all dangers.

This hymn is most dear to Lord Ram in the sense that it pleases him the most and he becomes extremely obliged and grateful to the person who recites this Stotra. Therefore, anyone who wishes to please Lord Ram should say prayers to him using this hymn known as Ramstavaraj. This hymn should be used to do Japa (constant repetition of the Lord’s holy and divine name) in order to invoke Lord Ram’s divine intercession and to seek his all-wish-fulfilling blessings.

[Note—¹The devotee who recites this ‘Ramstavaraj’ Stotra should purify himself by bath and other sanctified procedures. Then he should sit down calmly with water in his right hand. He should start the recitation of this Stotra by first reciting the words of this verse called ‘Viniyog’. Then the water should be poured into some receptacle or left on the ground. Then the recitation should be done from the very first word of verse no. 1 and finished off at the last word of verse no. 98 without any interruption.

²An Anushtup Chanda is a composition of verses in the poetic style called ‘Anushtup’ in which there are four ‘Charans’ or steps or stanzas, and each Charan has eight letters. Therefore, the total number of letters in each verse is 4 x 8 = 32 letters in all.]

सूत उवाच

सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञं व्यासं सत्यवती—सुतम् । धर्मपुत्रः प्रहृष्टात्मा प्रत्युवाच मुनीश्वरम् ॥१॥

1. Sage Sut said, 'Yudhisthir, the son of Dharma and an exalted soul, said cheerfully to sage Veda Vyas, the son of Satyawati, who was well versed in the meaning and truthful essence of all the scriptures, was very enlightened, erudite and scholarly as well as the most exalted amongst the sages (1).

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

भगवन्! योगिनां श्रेष्ठ! सर्वशास्त्रविशारद! । किं तत्त्वं किं परं जाप्यं किं ध्यानं मुक्तिसाधनम् ॥२॥

2. Yudhisthir said to Veda Vyas, 'Oh Lord! You are the most exalted amongst Yogis (ascetics) and a scholar par-excellence of all the scriptures. What is that which is called the essential principle, the irrefutable truth and the absolute reality? Which is the best and the most excellent Mantra to do Japa with? What is the method to do meditation and to concentrate upon the supreme Brahm and upon the pure-self? And what is the path to liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation in this world? (2).

वेदव्यास उवाच

श्रोतुमिच्छामि तत्सर्वं ब्रूहि मे मुनिसत्तम! धर्मराज महाभाग! शृणु वक्ष्यामि तत्त्वतः ॥३॥

3. Please be kind enough to answer these questions'.

Sage Veda Vyas replied, 'Oh Dhramaraj! Oh the most fortunate and great one! I am answering your question; listen to it carefully (3).

यत्परं सद्गुणातीतं यज्ज्योतिरमलं शिवम् । तदेव परमं तत्त्वं कैवल्यं पदकारणम् ॥४॥

4. That which is beyond the three characteristic qualities that mark all the creatures of this creation—such as the qualities called Sata, Raja and Tama; that which is an embodiment of divine light of wisdom, eruditions and enlightenment, that which is pure, immaculate and free from all sorts of corruptions, taints and blemishes, that which is the all-welfare bestowing supreme entity which is the absolute Truth and Reality of this existence—such an eclectic, sublime, holy and divine entity is the only one that can bestow the ultimate form of 'Kaivalya Mukti'¹, or that form of liberation and deliverance for the soul of the creature which has no alternatives and which is unique in the sense that the soul is given final emancipation and salvation so that it does not have to enter the cycle of birth and death again (4).

[Note—¹The *Kaivalya Mukti* is the salvation of the soul whereby it merges with the supreme soul called Brahm and becomes one with it.]

श्रीरामेति परं जाप्यं तारकं ब्रह्मसंज्ञकम् । ब्रह्महत्यादि पापघ्नमिति वेदविदो विदुः ॥५॥

5. Lord Ram's divine and holy name is the most potent, supreme and excellent Mantra amongst all the Mantras; it is equivalent to and synonymous with the supreme Brahm (the absolute and supreme entity). It has the potential to take the creature across the ocean represented by this mundane, delusory and entrapping world. That is why it is called the 'Tarak Mantra', and that is also why it is the best Mantra that should be used for doing Japa (repetition of the divine name of the Lord by a spiritual aspirant).

Those who are expert in the knowledge propounded by the Vedas positively assert that it has the power and strength to destroy (purge, purify, cleanse, annihilate and exhaust) the horrifying effects of great sins such as, inter alia, the killing of a Brahmin (5).

श्रीराम रामेति जना ये जपन्ति च सर्वदा । तेषां भुक्तिश्च मुक्तिश्च भविष्यति न संशयः ॥६॥

6. Those spiritual seekers/aspirants who repeat the holy name of Lord Ram constantly and consistently, with due devotion, faith, diligence and sincerity, are sure to get dual benefits of enjoyment of this materialistic world, called 'Bhog', on the one hand, as well as the deliverance from its entrapments and emancipation and salvation of their souls, called 'Mukti', on the other hand (6).

स्तवराजं पुरा प्रोक्तं नारदेन च धीमता । तत्सर्वं सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि हरिध्यानपुरःसरम् ॥७॥

7. The most erudite and foremost devotee of the Lord, sage Narad was the first sage who had enunciated these Stotras (hymns) called 'Stavaraj' on some previous occasion. I shall repeat it verbatim for the purpose of remembering and honouring my Lord through them (7).

तापत्रयाऽग्निशमनं सर्वाघौध—निकृन्तनम् । दारिद्र्यदुःख—शमनं सर्वसम्पत्करं शिवम् ॥८॥

8. This holy hymn called 'Ram Stavaraj' is potent enough to destroy the disastrous effects caused by the three types of torments that burn all living beings in their scorching fires—'Adhi-Daihik', 'Adhi-Daivik' and 'Adhi-Bhautik'¹. That is, this hymn acts like a soothing balm to provide solace and succour to the creature who has been literally scorched by the ferocious fire of miseries that engulf all living creatures in this creation.

It is able to also destroy the treasury of all sins and their evil effects. It can calm down or eliminate the troubles and tribulations, miseries and distresses arising out of poverty

and various other existential sorrows. It is the provider of all round wellbeing and auspiciousness to the creature. This is an absolute truth (8).

[Note—¹(i) Adhi Daihik— torments that the creature suffers due to his body, such as old age and illness; (ii) Adhi Daivik— torments that the creature suffers due to the opposed Gods and malignant stars; and (iii) Adhi Bhautik— torments that the creature suffers due to other terrestrial creatures such as enemies, thieves, competitors, kings etc. reptiles such as snakes, animals such as lions etc.]

विज्ञानफलदं दिव्यं मोक्षैकफलसाधनम् । नमस्कृत्य प्रवक्ष्यामि रामं कृष्णं जगन्मयम् ॥९॥

9. After bowing reverentially before Lords Ram and Krishna who uniformly pervade in the entire animate as well as the inanimate worlds, I shall describe this ‘Ram Stavaraj Stotras’(hymns) which provide the divine fruit of true knowledge and enlightenment as well as represent the only easy path to emancipation and salvation (Mukti) of the soul (9).

अयोध्यानगरे रम्ये रत्नमण्डपमध्यगे । स्मरेत् कल्पतरोर्मूले रत्नसिंहासनं शुभम् ॥१०॥

10. The seeker/aspirant should visualise a gem-studded throne in Ayodhya. This throne is under the shadow of the ‘Kalpa Tree’ (the evergreen, wish-fulfilling tree of Gods) in a gem-studded pavilion (10).

तन्मध्येऽष्टदलं पद्मं नानारत्नैश्च वेष्टितम् । स्मरेन्मध्ये दाशरथिं सहस्रादित्यतेजसम् ॥११॥

11. On that gleaming and magnificent throne, in the center of it, the spiritual seeker/aspirant should visualise that there is 8-petal lotus fully embellished with glittering gems. On it is seated the son of Dasrath, Lord Ram, who is as splendorous and radiant as thousands of suns (11).

पितुरङ्कगतं राममिन्द्रनील—मणिप्रभम् । कोमलाङ्गं विशालाक्षं विद्युद्वर्णाम्बरावृतम् ॥१२॥

12. He (Lord Ram) is seated on the lap of his father. He is dark complexioned like the Indra’s gem called ‘Indraneel Mani’. He has a tender (soft, delicate) body and large eyes, and he is wearing clothes which resemble the dazzle and glitter of lightening (12).

भानुकोटिप्रतीकाशं किरीटेन विराजितम् । रत्नग्रैवेयकेयूर—रत्नकुण्डल मण्डितम् ॥१३॥

13. He has a divine radiance equivalent to millions of suns effusing from his holy body. He is adorned by a magnificent crown with a tiara, and is wearing a gem-studded necklace as well as ear-rings which are also studded with gems (13).

रत्नकङ्कणमञ्जीर—कटिसूत्रैरलङ्कृतम् । श्रीवत्सकौस्तुभोरस्कं मुक्ताहारोपशोभितम् ।।१४।।

14. He is adorned with gem-studded bracelets, anklets and a waist-band. He wears a necklace of pearls, has the mark of 'Sri Vatsa' and also wears the 'Kaustav jewel' on his chest (14).

[Note--The *Kaustav gem* is worn by Vishnu; *Sri Vatsa* is the mark of sage Brighu's footprints on the chest of Vishnu.]

दिव्यरत्नसमायुक्तं मुद्रिकाभिरलङ्कृतम् । राघवं द्विभुजं बालं राममीषत्—स्मिताननम् ।।१५।।

15. This form of Lord Ram is as pleasant and charming as that of a child. He is also adorned with finger-rings studded with beautiful gems. He has a pleasant, bewitching and sweet smile on his face. He has two arms (15).

[Note--Lord Vishnu is depicted by legend as having four arms. His incarnation Lord Ram has only two arms because Vishnu has assumed the form of a human being. A man has two arms and not four.]

तुलसी—कुन्द—मन्दार—पुष्पमाल्यैरलङ्कृतम् । कर्पूरा—ऽगुरु—कस्तूरी—दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम् ।।१६।।

16. He is adorned by garlands made up of Tulsi (basil), Kund (jasmine/lotus flower), Mandar (flowers of the coral tree) and similar flowers. His body is smeared by (or rubbed by) a scented paste consisting of camphor, aloe-wood and powdered musk which emanates a pleasant fragrance (16).

योगशास्त्रेष्वभिरतं योगीशं योगदायकम् । सदा भरत—सौमित्रि—शत्रुघ्नैरुपशोभितम् ।।१७।।

17. He is involved in the study and practice of the science of Yoga (meditation). Lord Ram is the lord of Yogis (ascetics). He is able to bestow the knowledge and benefits of Yoga to others (i.e. he is well-versed in the knowledge of the science of Yoga and is able to teach others about it). He is attended by (literally, adorned by) Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. [That is, the presence of these three brothers adds majesty and glory to the Lord because their presence makes Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram complete with all his parts.] (17).

विद्याधर—सुराधीश—सिद्धगन्धर्व—किन्नरैः । योगीन्द्रैर्नारदाद्यैश्च स्तूयमानमहर्निशम् ॥१८॥

18. He is always praised, honoured and adored by Vidyadhar (a category of semi-Gods who are more exalted than Gandharvas and Kinnars but are not full-fledged Gods), Indra (the king of Gods), Siddhas (mystics; the attained ones), Gandharvas (semi-Gods; celestial musicians), Kinnars (celestial dancers and singers; legendary semi-Gods with the head of a horse), as well as by Narad and other exalted sages and seers (18).

विश्वामित्र—वसिष्ठादि—मुनिभिःपरिसेवितम् । सनकादि—मुनिश्रेष्ठैर्योगिवृन्दैश्च सेवितम् ॥१९॥

19. He is being served by the exalted sages and seers such as Vishwamitra, Vashistha etc., as well as by Yogis and celestial sages such as Sankadi etc. (19).

रामं रघुवरं वीरं धनुर्वेद—विशारदम् । मङ्गलयतनं देवं रामं राजीवलोचनम् ॥२०॥

20. Lord Ram is the best and the most exalted king in the race of kings belonging to the line of Raghu. He is brave, valiant and courageous. He is an expert archer and proficient in the use of the bow. He is an image/embodyment of auspiciousness, and has lotus-like (beautiful and enchanting) eyes (20).

सर्वशास्त्रार्थ—तत्त्वज्ञमानन्दकर—सुन्दरम् । कौसल्यानन्दनं रामं धनुर्बाणधरं हरिम् ॥२१॥

21. He knows the essential and sublime truth as expounded by all the scriptures, and has a deep insight into their true meaning. He also knows all of them by heart. He is charming and beautiful to look at, and is the bestower of bliss, happiness and joy to all. He provides delight to Kaushalya (his mother), and he is famous as the one who holds a bow and an arrow (21).

एवं सञ्चिन्तयन् विष्णुं यज्ज्योतिरमलं विभुम् । प्रहृष्टमानसो भूत्वा मुनिवर्यः स नारदः ॥२२॥

22. Remembering Lord Vishnu who has revealed himself as Lord Ram possessing all the above peerless, eclectic and divine holistic qualities which are sublime and unique, the Lord who is uncorrupt and immaculate, having no taints and blemishes of any kind whatsoever, who is omnipresent, all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing, and who embodies the splendour and radiance of light¹ that is divine and sublime, sage Narad felt extremely cheerful and exhilarated (22).

[Note--¹Light here represents the eclectic virtues of divinity, holiness, sublimity, enlightenment, wisdom and erudition; it is a metaphor for that which is the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality.]

सर्वलोक—हितार्थाय तुष्टाव रघुनन्दनम् । कृताञ्जलिपुटो भूत्वा चिन्तयन्नद्भुतं हरिम् ॥२३॥

23. Narad folded his hands in reverence and prayed to Lord Ram who enhances the bliss, joy and happiness of the world. He prayed for the welfare and auspiciousness of the entire world (23).

यदेकं यत्परं नित्यं तदनन्तं चिदात्मकम् । यदेकं व्यापकं लोके तद्रूपं चिन्तयाम्यहम् ॥२४॥

24. Narad prayed, 'I remember that form of Lord Ram which is unique, unparalleled and without a second; which is eclectic, holy, divine, supreme and transcendental; which is perpetual, constant, consistent, eternal, truthful, permanent, ceaseless, immutable, invariable, steady and unchanging; which is without an end, eternal, everlasting, infinite, measureless and fathomless; which is pure consciousness, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment personified; which is the best and the most exalted of all the forms in which Lord Vishnu (or the Viraat Purush representing Brahm) has ever manifested; and which is omnipresent, all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing (24).

विज्ञानहेतुं विमलायताक्षं प्रज्ञानरूपं स्वसुखैकहेतुम् । श्रीरामचन्द्रं हरिमादिदेवं परात्परं राममहं भजामि ॥२५॥

25. I worship, honour and adore that Lord Ram who is the essence of all sciences, i.e. he represents the factor that is at the base of all knowledge; he is the essence which is the root from which all forms of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and truthful knowledge about the ultimate reality sprout; he is the object and aim of all metaphysical and spiritual research and study.

He possesses a divine sight which is blessed with the sublime and glorious virtues of having long foresight and deep insight. He is an embodiment personification of Pragyan (enlightenment, wisdom, erudition, sagacity).

He is the cause of supreme bliss arising out of self-realisation (because he is the pure consciousness called the Atma of the creature personified, and this Atma is characterised by inherently possessing the grand virtue of blissfulness).

He is the most ancient Lord (or is the first amongst all the Gods), and is the most exalted and most superior amongst them all' (25).

कविं पुराणं पुरुषं पुरस्तात् सनातनं योगिनमीशितारम् ।

अणोरणीयां समनन्तवीर्यं प्राणेश्वरं राममसौ ददर्श ॥२६॥

26. When sage Narad had prayed as above, he had a divine vision of Lord Ram who is an honoured, well-lettered and a learned One.

The Lord has been lauded by the ancient Purans as the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic gross body of creation and another name of the all-pervading supreme Lord of creation known as Vishnu)¹.

He represents all the primeval essential elements of creation (i.e. Lord Ram personifies all the five basic elements earth, water, fire, air and space from which the whole creation has evolved).

He is eternal, perpetual, everlasting, primeval, ancient, traditional and absolutely truthful (a reference to Brahma and Vishnu).

He is the most exalted amongst the Yogis (realised ascetics and hermits) on the one hand, and provides emancipation and salvation to them on the other².

He pervades uniformly and universally in the entire creation—right from the minutest forms of creatures to the most colossus ones, and in both the two types of worlds—the animate and the inanimate.

He is the almighty, omnipotent and most powerful force of creation. He is majestic, stupendous, magnificent and glorious in his microcosmic as well as macrocosmic forms. He is of an immeasurable strength, force, prowess, potent and valour.

He is indeed the 'Lord of Pran' which is the vital wind that is at the core of all forms of life in this creation. [That is, Lord Ram, as the Supreme Being, controls all the factors of life including the vital winds such as Pran or breath and is the Lord of the creature's soul.] (26).

[Note—¹The phrase 'Puran Purush' can be interpreted differently to mean the Lord who is most ancient, traditional and primeval. He is the ancient Lord who has been honoured by ancient traditional histories of Hindus as the most virtuous and powerful Lord of all creatures as well as the cause and essence of the entire creation. Thus, Lord Ram personifies this macrocosmic Viraat Purush in a microcosmic form.

²Lord Ram, as a human being, is like an enlightened ascetic or hermit who remains detached from all worldly involvements, is a renunciate par-excellence, and ever engrossed in meditation and contemplation. On the other hand, as the supreme transcendental Brahm personified, he is the liberator and deliverer of the creature's soul, he is the Supreme Being who bestows the boon of emancipation and salvation to the creature.]

नारद उवाच

नारायणं जगन्नाथमभिरामं जगत्पतिम् । कविं पुराणं वागीशं रामं दशरथात्मजम् ॥२७॥

27. Sage Narad paid his humble obeisance to Lord Ram, saying, 'Oh Narayan (Vishnu), Oh Jagganath (Lord of the world)! You are the one who is the enhancer of happiness, joy, delight and bliss of all; you are the master and Lord of the entire world; you are an expert

in languages and a wise, erudite, sagacious and learned One; you are an embodiment of the Purans (i.e. you personify all the divine and eclectic values and virtues propounded, expounded, enunciated and espoused by ancient religious mythological histories); you are the most exalted amongst wise and realised ascetics and hermits called Yogis (i.e. you are like an emperor amongst them); and you have taken birth, or revealed yourself as the son of king Dasrath of Ayodhya—I most reverentially bow before and pay my respectful obeisance to such an exalted and divine Lord known as ‘Ram’ (27).

राजराजं रघुवरं कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनम् । भर्गं वरेण्यं विश्वेशं रघुनाथं जगद्गुरुम् ॥२८॥

28. Oh King Lord Ram, the emperor amongst kings, the most exalted one amongst the kings of the Raghu dynasty, the enhancer of the joys and pleasures of mother Kaushalya, the personification of Lord Shiva (standing for such virtues as auspiciousness, truthfulness, purity, wisdom, enlightenment and renunciation) and Lord Brahma (standing for such virtues as knowledge, erudition, sagacity, scholarship and wisdom because Brahma had created the Vedas which are metaphors for these qualities, as well as for the authority to create the world), the most revered, the most senior, the most exalted and the chief amongst all the manifestations of Brahm in this creation as well as its Lord, the Lord of the Raghu’s race, and the Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) to the entire creation. I bow before you most humbly and reverentially (28).

सत्यं सत्यप्रियं श्रेष्ठं जानकीवल्लभं विभुम् । सौमित्रिपूर्वजं शान्तं कामदं कमलक्षणम् ॥२९॥

29. You are an embodiment/image/personification of the grand virtue of truthfulness; you are the lover of truth and honesty; you are the most excellent and exalted being; you are the beloved of Janki (Sita); you are honoured by the epithet of ‘Vibho’¹; you are the elder brother of Laxman; you are tranquil, serene, calm and peaceful by temperament; you are the fulfiller of all the desires and wishes of the creature; you are lotus-eyed—I bow before Lord Ram most reverentially and devotionally (29).

[Note—¹The word *Vibho* means ‘one who is omnipresent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, almighty, majestic and powerful Lord of all’. It is an epithet usually used to describe the virtues of Lord Vishnu who is regarded as being synonymous with both Brahm, the attributeless and infinite Supreme Being who had manifested as Narayan, as well as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of this creation. He is also called the ‘Chief Purush’.

Another interpretation of this verse is that ‘Vibho’ refers to Brahm while the word ‘Chief Purush’ refers to Lord Vishnu in the form of Viraat Purush. It is due to the joint efforts of Brahm and the Viraat Purush that this creation has come into being.]

आदित्यं रविमीशानं षृणिं सूर्यमनामयम् । आनन्दरूपिणं सौम्यं राघवं करुणामयम् ॥३०॥

30. You are ‘Aditya’ (the sons of Aditi— the Gods, the Sun, Indra, Vaman the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, the 8 Vasus), ‘Ravi’ (the Sun, the Fire, the leader), ‘Ishan’ (Lord Shiva; the flag bearer of Dharma or righteousness, probity, propriety and auspiciousness), ‘Grihini’ (the one who accepts everything, or the one to whom all oblations, libations, worships and sacrifices are offered), ‘Surya’ (the Sun God; as splendid as the celestial Sun), ‘Anamaya’ (healthy, without any faults or blemishes, without any reproach), ‘Anand Roop’ (an embodiment/personification/image of bliss, joy and happiness), ‘Saumya’ (sober, dignified, graceful and modest), as well as ‘Karunamayam’ (full of mercy, kindness and compassion). I bow before such a Lord Ram, most humbly and reverentially (30).

यामदग्निं तपोमूर्तिं रामं परशुधारिणम् । वाक्पतिं वरदं वाच्यं श्रीपतिं पक्षिवाहनम् ॥३१॥

31. For all practical purposes, you are like the son of sage Jamdagni, i.e. sage Parashuram, who is a living image or an icon of Tapa (one who observes severe austerities and penances; one who undergoes hardships and sufferance for some noble cause and spiritual upliftment). In that manifestation (as Parashuram), you hold an axe. You are the Lord of speech, the thing or subject that is spoken about in words, as well as the object of speech or the words spoken. You are a granter of boons. You are the Lord of Laxmi (i.e. you are Lord Vishnu) who rides the legendary bird known as Garud (the legendary eagle/heron)—I bow before such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and devotionally (31).

श्रीशार्ङ्गधारिणं रामं चिन्मयानन्दविग्रहम् । हलधृग्—विष्णुमीशानं बलरामं कृपानिधिम् ॥३२॥

32. Oh Lord Ram! You hold a bow called ‘Shaarang’ (a bow held by Lord Vishnu). You are an image or personification of profound wisdom and enlightenment as well as eternal and truthful beatitude and felicity.

You hold a plough i.e. you are Balraam, the elder brother of Lord Krishna. You are Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation) and Ishan (Shiva the concluder of creation and considered an exalted ascetic, most wise, auspicious, truthful and an image of bliss).

You are a treasury of mercy, kindness and compassion. I bow before such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and with utmost humility (32).

श्रीवल्लभं कृपानाथं जगन्मोहनमच्युतम् । मत्स्य—कूर्म—वाराहादि—रूपधारिणमव्ययम् ॥३३॥

33. You are the beloved Lord of Goddess Laxmi, also known as ‘Sri’. You are the Lord who has such noble virtues as compassion, mercy and kindness. You are the one who

keeps the entire world enthralled. You are imperishable and indestructible; you never fall from your exalted stature or get demoted and tarnished in anyway.

You have assumed various forms, such as the legendary fish, the tortoise and the boar etc. on different occasions—I bow before such a Lord Ram with the greatest of reverence and devotion (33).

वासुदेवं जगद्योनिमनादिनिधनं हरिम् । गोविन्दं गोपतिं विष्णुं गोपीजनमनोहरम् ॥३४॥

34. You are also called the son of Vasudeo (i.e. Lord Krishna). You are the creator of the world, are without a beginning or an end, and are the Lord of the cows as well as the one who has enchanted the heart of the cowherd maids (of Vrindavan). Your name is Govind as well as Vishnu—I bow before such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and with humility (34).

[Note--By calling Lord Ram as Krishna, the composer of these hymns tries to establish that there is no difference between Lord Ram and Krishna.]

गो—गोपालपरीवारं गोपकन्या—समावृतम् । विद्युत्पुञ्जप्रतीकाशं रामं कृष्णं जगन्मयम् ॥३५॥

35. Surrounded by cows, cowherd boys, girls and their families in your manifestation as Lord Krishna, you effuse a divine radiance and are as splendid and glorious as the dazzle of electric. You pervade uniformly and universally throughout the whole world (because you are omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing). Conversely, the entire creation is nothing but your image. I bow before such a Lord Ram with utmost reverence and devotion (35).

गो—गोपिका—समाकीर्णं वेणुवादन—तत्परम् । कामरूपं कलावन्तं कामिनी—कामदं विभुम् ॥३६॥

36. Oh Vibho (omnipotent, almighty, omnipresent Lord; an epithet for Lord Vishnu)! Being surrounded by cows and cowherd maids (during your manifestation as Lord Krishna), you expertly play the enchanting music of the flute.

You are as beautiful and enchanting as Kamdeo-cupid. You embody all the different 'Kalaas' that form the texture of a man's character and personality (i.e. the various auspicious and noble qualities and virtues that a man possesses are all personified in your divine form). You fulfill the desires of charming women (36).

मन्मथं मथुरानाथं माधवं मकरध्वजम् । श्रीधरं श्रीकरं श्रीशं श्रीनिवासं परात्परम् ॥३७॥

37. You are the personification of 'Manmath' (Kamdeo-cupid) and are the Lord of Mathura (i.e. Lord Krishna). You are known by the names of Maadhav, Makardwaj, Sridhar, Srikar, Srisham and Srinivaas.

You are the supreme and the most exalted transcendental Lord of the entire creation— I bow before such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and with utmost devotion (37).

भूतेशं भूपतिं भद्रं विभूतिं भूतिभूषणम् । सर्वदुःखहरं वीरं दुष्टदानववैरिणम् ॥३८॥

38. You are the Lord of the five basic elements (earth, water, fire, wind and space which are the building blocks of creation). You the Lord of the earth (i.e. you are the emperor of all living beings on the earth). You are a righteous, noble, civilized, dignified, learned and properly groomed gentleman.

You are one who is dignified, majestic, glorious, magnificent, stupendous and almighty, being a fountainhead of all such virtues which are collectively described as 'excellent', and one who possesses supernatural powers¹. Being graced with these holistic and glorious virtues, you are like an 'ornament' of the world (i.e. your noble virtues are like an ornament which adorns the world).

You are the vanquisher of all the sorrows, distresses, miseries, troubles and tribulations (that afflict your devotees in this world). You are brave, courageous, valiant, valorous and strong. You are the slayer of evil demons representing evil forces in the world—I bow before such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and devotionally (38).

[Note--¹The word *Vibhuti* also means richness and prosperity. Hence, a person who is rich with these virtues and qualities is a 'Vibhuti'.]

श्रीनृसिंहं महाबाहुं महान्तं दीप्ततेजसम् । चिदानन्दमयं नित्यं प्रणवं ज्योतिरूपिणम् ॥३९॥

39. You had assumed the form of 'Narsingh' (half lion, half man incarnation of Vishnu to protect his child-devotee Prahalad from the torments of the latter's demon father).

You have long arms (a metaphor for being able to extend all help to your devotees, no matter what happens). You are most exalted and revered, and the ultimate refuge and shelter for all (your devotees)¹.

You are aglow with a radiant splendour that is divine and holy as well as brilliant and dazzling as the light of a burning fire.

You remain perpetually in a state of utmost bliss and tranquility, of peace and happiness. You are characterized by being perpetual, constant, consistent, eternal, permanent, ceaseless, immutable, invariable, steady and unchanging.

You personify 'Pranav'² at the macro level of existence. You are an embodiment of light (symbolizing the energy of fire and the enlightenment that comes with truthful knowledge). I reverentially bow before Lord Ram to pay my deepest respect and homage (39).

[Note—¹The word *Mahaant* has the following connotations—(a) An abbot of a monastery, implying that Lord Ram is the chief-in-command who takes care of all those who reside in the monastery of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility of thoughts and deeds, religiosity, truthfulness and uprightness. (b) The word also means the ‘great end’, implying the final emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature from where it does not have to come back again to enter the cycle of birth and death.

²The word *Pranav* refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm recognised by the ethereal primary monosyllable word OM.]

आदित्यमण्डलगतं निश्चितार्थ—स्वरूपिणम् । भक्तप्रियं पद्मनेत्रं भक्तानामीप्सितप्रदम् ॥४०॥

40. You are present in the subtle sky like the Sun is in the physical sky. Or, you shine in this world like the Sun shines in the sky; the Sun shining brilliantly is your representative in the sky.

You have no ambiguity and confusions surrounding yourself, as you are an embodiment of the absolute, unequivocal, irrefutable and irrevocable Truth and Reality in creation.

You are very endearing to your devotees and are the fulfiller of their wishes, desires, aspirations, hopes and expectations. You have eyes that resemble the beautiful flowers of the lotus plant. I bow before such a Lord Ram with most reverence and devotion (40).

कौशल्येयं कलामूर्तिं काकुत्स्थं कमलाप्रियम् । सिंहासने समासीनं नित्यव्रतमकल्मषम् ॥४१॥

41. You (Lord Ram) are the son of Kaushalaya and born in the clan of king Kukustha. You are the maverick Lord who does mysterious deeds sportingly, and at the same time you are an image of (i.e. you personify) all the different virtues in creation which are collectively called ‘Kalaas’ that characterize the personality and bearing of a living being. You are dear to Kamlaa (another name of Goddess Laxmi because she holds a lotus in her hands).

You are seated on a throne in a meditative posture of Samadhi (accompanied by Kamlaa/Laxmi who has manifested herself in the form of Sita).

You are constantly, consistently and persistently steadfast in following the chosen path of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, religiosity and uprightness; you uphold your righteous words, vows and promises.

You are sinless and without any reproach; you are without any blemishes and taints. I reverentially bow before Lord Ram to pay my deepest respect and homage (41).

विश्वामित्रप्रियं दान्तं स्वदारनियतव्रतम् । यज्ञेशं यज्ञपुरुषं यज्ञपालनतत्परम् ॥४२॥

42. You are very dear to sage Vishwamitra, are self-restrained, and are faithful and committed to your wife (Sita).

You are the Lord for whom the offerings are made in the fire sacrifice, and you a personification of the fire sacrifice itself. [That is, you are both the Lord to honour whom the fire sacrifice is done as well as the Fire God himself who is worshipped in the form of the sacred fire of the sacrifice.] You are very eager to protect and uphold the sanctity of such fire sacrifices; at the same time, you do them diligently yourself. I reverentially bow before Lord Ram to pay my deepest respect and homage (42).

सत्यसन्धं जितक्रोधं शरणागत—वत्सलम् । सर्वक्लेशापहरणं विभीषणवरप्रदम् ॥४३॥

43. You are committed to truthfulness, are without a trace of anger and vengeance (or are the conqueror of this negative trait), are the protector of those who have come to take refuge/shelter in your feet, are the eliminator and destroyer of all sorrows, miseries, troubles and tribulations, and are the one who had blessed Vibhishan (even though he was a demon and a betrayer of his own brother Ravana). I bow before such a Lord Ram with great humility and respect (43).

दशग्रीवहरं रौद्रं केशवं केशिमर्दनम् । बालिप्रमथनं वीरं सुग्रीवेप्सितराज्यदम् ॥४४॥

44. You are the slayer of the 10-headed Ravana. You are Rudra personified. [That is, you represent the angry form of Shiva for the express purpose of killing sinful monsters who represent all the evil forces and negativity in creation. You have to eliminate them in order to restore the balance in favour of goodness and righteousness.]

You are known as Keshav because you had slayed a most terrible ogre known as Keshi.

You had also killed the brave Vaali (the monkey king of Kishkindha) and had bestowed the kingdom to Sugriv (the younger brother of Vali who had taken refuge with Lord Ram and sought the Lord's help to retrieve his wife and kingdom usurped by his elder brother). I reverentially bow before Lord Ram to pay my deepest respect and homage (44).

नर—वानर—देवैश्च सेवितं हनुमत्प्रियम् । शुद्धं सूक्ष्मं परं शान्तं तारकं ब्रह्मरूपिणम् ॥४५॥

45. You are served by men, monkeys as well as by the Gods. You are very dear to Hanuman.

You are pure, immaculate and without any blemishes and taints of any kind whatsoever. Your real form is subtle and sublime like the microcosmic Atma as well as the microscopic, all powerful Atom.

Your form is an image of tranquility, serenity, peace, calmness and placidity. You are the 'Tarak Brahm' personified. [Refer Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 5-6. That is, you provide liberation and deliverance to those who seek shelter with you, and ensure emancipation and salvation of their souls.]

I bow before such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and humbly (45).

सर्वभूतात्म—भूतस्थं सर्वाधारं सनातनम् । सर्वकारणकर्तारं निदानं प्रकृतेः परम् ॥४६॥

46. You are present in all the creatures as their Atma (the pure consciousness soul), are the very foundation on which everything rests, and are the truthful, infinite, eternal and absolute reality of creation.

You are the root of all causes and reasons, their results and effects, as well as their answers and remedies¹. You are beyond the realm or reach of Maya (delusions) and are the Supreme Being personified—I bow to such a Lord Ram, most reverentially and devotionally (46).

[Note—¹For example, if there is a certain problem, there must be a cause for it, and a remedy for it. This verse implies that the Lord is not only the cause of everything that exists, being the primary creator of creation, but the very conception of anything existing itself, as well as the means to understand what that particular thing is all about, to unravel its secrets, and also to find remedies for any problems created by that thing. In fact, the entire circle—from the conception of anything right up to its conclusion is overseen by the Lord of creation.]

निरामयं निराभासं निरवद्यं निरञ्जनम् । नित्यानन्दं निराकारमद्वैतं तमसः परम् ॥४७॥

47. You are Niramaye (one who is free from any kind of diseases—spiritual, mental, physical, psychological, moral, etc. that may taint one's character and personality). You are Niravhas (un-manifest, invisible, imperceptible, and without any physical attributes and qualities that can be quantified). You are Nirvadyam (one who is so divine, holy, graceful, exalted, sublime, great and majestic that his virtues and glories simply cannot be narrated in words). You are Niranjan (one having no defects, faults, taints, blemishes and scars of any kind; one who is immaculate and pure).

You are eternally blissful and remain perpetually in a state of joyous abandon. You are without any attributes, forms and specifics. You are non-dual and a unique entity that has no parallel, no match or comparison. You have no darkness of ignorance, called 'Tamas', ever affecting your holy, pure and divine self; you are indeed the supreme transcendental Being who is beyond the reach of the dark long shadow cast by delusions and ignorance. I pay my deepest of respects, and bow myself most reverentially before such a Lord Ram who has these unique eclectic qualities and virtues (47).

परात्परतरं तत्त्वं सत्यानन्दं चिदात्मकम् । मनसा शिरसा नित्यं प्रणमामि रघूत्तमम् ॥४८॥

48. You are the first among equals and the best amongst the exalted ones; you are an embodiment of the essence of truth knowledge; you are the absolute, irrefutable and universal Truth as well as the bliss obtained with this realisation (or you are a true image of beatitude and felicity); and you are the pure conscious enlightenment Atma or soul of the creature.

I bow my head most reverentially and on a daily basis, with my mind and heart fully devoted to his Lordship who is the most exalted and the best king in the race of kings belonging to the Raghu dynasty (of Ayodhya). [That is, I give my heartfelt respects and pay my sincere obeisance to Lord Ram with my mind, intellect and heart committed to what I say; my whole being is devoted to the worship of and honouring the Lord who is the best Lord in the line of kings of the Raghu dynasty of Ayodhya.] (48).

सूर्यमण्डलमध्यस्थं रामं सीतासमन्वितम् । नमामि पुण्डरीकाक्षममेयं गुरुतत्परम् ॥४९॥

49. Lord Ram along with Sita is symbolically established in the centre of the world just like the Sun is established as the focal point of the visible world.

I bow most reverentially, devotionally and faithfully to the Lord who has (beautiful and enchanting) eyes resembling the lotus flower, and who is the most learned, wise and enlightened Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and spiritual guide), well-versed in the essence of all the scriptures, of all the living beings in this creation (49).

नमोऽस्तु वासुदेवाय ज्योतिषां पतये नमः । नमोऽस्तु रामदेवाय जगदानन्दरूपिणे ॥५०॥

50. I bow most reverentially and with greatest of humility to Vasudeo who is the Lord of light. [Here, 'light' refers to the glow of pure consciousness as well as enlightenment, wisdom, knowledge, erudition and sagacity that effuses from the Lord like divine effulgence and illuminates the entire creation.]

I bow again before Lord Ram who bestows happiness and joy to the world and is an image of happiness and bliss himself (50).

नमो वेदान्तनिष्ठाय योगिने ब्रह्मवादिने । मायामयनिरासाय प्रसन्नजनसेविने ॥५१॥

51. I bow most reverentially before the Lord who is an expert in and a strict follower of the tenets, axioms and maxims enunciated in Vedant (Upanishads); who is a Yogi (ascetic and hermit) par excellence; and who is an expert in the truthful knowledge about the supreme transcendental Brahm (i.e. he is well-versed about the ultimate, supreme,

absolute, irrefutable, incontrovertible Reality and the universal unequivocal Truth in this creation) and an erudite exponent of that knowledge.

The Lord is an embodiment of Maya (the powerful forces of worldly delusions and ignorance that are at the core of creation of this imaginary, artificial and hallucinating world of allurements that traps the creature in its mirage-like charm) as well as beyond its purview (because Maya is generated by the Lord himself in order to carry on with the process of creation and destruction in an endless cycle, and therefore Maya cannot neither deceive him nor supersede him; the Lord is free from the deluding effects of Maya).

The Lord protects his devotees, or those who have taken refuge and shelter with him, most cheerfully and gladly (51).

वन्दामहे महेशानं चण्ड—कोदण्ड—खण्डनम् । जानकीहृदयानन्द—वर्द्धनं रघुनन्दनम् ॥५२॥

52. I praise and honour Raghunandan (literally a son belonging to the race of Raghu kings of Ayodhya) who had broken the strong and sturdy bow of Lord Shiva (at Janakpur in order to marry Sita), and had thereby enhanced the pleasure and happiness of Sita's heart by doing so¹ (52).

[Note—¹This is because Sita had wished to marry Lord Ram but was bound by her father's vows that stipulated that anyone who lifted and strung the bow of Shiva would have her hands in marriage, even if that meant that it was against her wishes. It was a very damning situation for Sita, and she had prayed frantically to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati to make it so happen that the vow was fulfilled by none but Lord Ram. So when the Lord broke the bow, it was natural that Sita's heart was filled with unbound exhilaration.]

उत्फुल्लामल—कोमलास्वतकलदल—श्यामाय रामाय ते कामाय प्रमदामनोहरगुणग्रामाय रामात्मने ।
योगारूढ—मुनीन्द्र—मानससरो हंसाय संसारविध्वंसाय स्फुरदोजसे रघुकुलोत्तंसाय पुंसे नमः ॥५३॥

53. I reverentially and most respectfully bow before Lord Ram who has a dark complexion and looks as enchanting and attractive as a fully blooming lotus flower, who is as attractive, enthralling and enamouring as the alluring God of love known as Kamdeo-cupid who enchants and captivates the heart and mind of beautiful women, who is a treasury and fount of all noble and righteous virtues and qualities, and who is the pure conscious Atma/soul of all the living creatures.

I reverentially and most respectfully bow before him who is ever engrossed/involved in doing/practicing Yoga (mediation and contemplation upon the Truth), who is like a swan floating in the lake-like heart of sages and seers, who has revealed himself as the brave, courageous, valiant, gallant and strong Lord Ram—who is the most exalted one in the race of kings of the Raghu dynasty—for the destruction of evil forces in this world (53).

भवोद्भवं वेदविदां वरिष्ठमादित्यं—चन्द्रानलसुप्रभावम् ।
सर्वात्मकं सर्वजगत्स्वरूपं नमामि रामं तमसः परस्तात् ॥५४॥

54. I most reverentially and with the greatest of respect bow before Lord Ram who is the source or fount from which the entire creation has come into being; who is the best amongst those who are experts in the knowledge of the Vedas, who is as majestic, stupendous, splendid, radiant, potent and powerful as the Sun, the Moon and the Fire; who is present in the form of the pure conscious Atma/soul of all the individual creatures as well as of the world at large (i.e. he is the soul of the entire creation, both at the micro as well as the macro levels), who embodies the entire world or whose image the entire visible world is.

I do so with proper awareness of the truth and reality, devoid of any darkness cast by ignorance or delusions; I honour him with full realisation of his most divine, sublime, holy, eclectic and ethereal form (54).

निरञ्जनं निष्प्रतिमं निरीहं निराश्रयं निष्कलमप्रपञ्चम् ।
नित्यं ध्रुवं निर्विषयं स्वरूपं निरन्तरं राममहं भजामि ॥५५॥

55. Lord Ram is 'Niranjan' (one having no defects, faults, taints, blemishes and scars of any kind; one who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure; an epithet applied to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation). He is without any specific image or form (because the supreme Lord has no specific and delineating attributes). He is without any worldly aspirations, expectations, desires or wants (as he is fully contented and fulfilled). He is without any need for taking refuge, shelter or help from anyone else (because he is the one who provides these to others instead of requiring them for himself). He is without any fraction or part (because he is wholesome, indivisible and immutable) as well as free from all worldly deceptions, tricks, cunning, conceit, fraud, artificiality, illusions, falsehoods and concealments.

I constantly, consistently, persistently and steadfastly worship and most reverentially adore and honour Lord Ram in the image of his divine 'self' which is Nitya (one who is perpetual, constant, consistent, eternal, absolute, permanent, ceaseless, immutable, invariable, steady and unchanging); which is Dhruv (steady, unchanging, unmoving, consistent, constant, eternal, everlasting and imperishable like the Polar Star); and which has no 'Vishaye', i.e. has no attachments towards and attractions for any of the worldly allurements and material comforts and pleasures pertaining to the sense organs and their gratifications in this materialistic, artificial, entrapping and deluding mundane world (that generally enthrall all living beings and keep them trapped, except the self-realised and enlightened souls) (55).

भवाब्धिपोतं भरताग्रजं तं भक्तप्रियं भानुकुलप्रदीपम् ।

भूतत्रिनाथं भुवनाधिपत्यं भजामि रामं भवरोगवैद्यम् ॥५६॥

56. He who resembles a ship or boat to help the creature (i.e. his devotees) to cross over this world which is like a vast and fathomless ocean, who is the elder brother of Bharat and most dear to his devotees, who is like a brilliant lighted lamp in the Solar race; who is the Lord of the three categories of creatures classified on the basis of the three class of characteristics possessed by them (called Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas respectively), who is the master and Lord of all the Bhuvans (all inhabitable worlds of which there are said to be fourteen in number), and who is like a doctor for the treatment of the diseases represented by all the insurmountable problems and miseries, spiritual and bodily, associated with this world of artificiality, delusions, illusions, ignorance, hallucinations and their ilk.

I worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who has these magnificent qualities (56).

सर्वाधिपत्यं समराङ्गधीरं सत्यं चिदानन्दमयं स्वरूपम् ।
सत्यं शिवं शान्तमयं शरण्यं सनातनं राममहं भजामि ॥५७॥

57. He is the Lord of the entire creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate worlds. He is bold, unrelenting, serious and steadfast during war and never turns his back in the face of adversities (i.e. who never shirks from his responsibilities and obligations). He is an embodiment of the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality. He is a personification of eternal and supreme bliss, joy and happiness. He is the truthful Lord Shiva (representing such glorious virtues as truth and auspiciousness, peace and tranquility, wisdom and enlightenment, renunciation of and detachment from all worldly attachments, etc.) personified. He accepts anyone who comes to seek his (Lord Ram's) refuge and protection, as he is renowned as the benevolent, magnanimous and benign benefactor of all those who have taken his refuge (irrespective of who that person is and what are his misdeed and sins). He is called 'Sanatan' (because he is eternal, perpetual, everlasting, primeval, ancient, traditional and absolutely truthful—a reference to Brahma the creator and to Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation).

I reverentially worship and most respectfully adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and qualities (57).

कार्यं क्रियाकारणमप्रमेयं कविं पुराणं कमलायताक्षम् ।
कुमारवेद्यं करुणामयं तं कल्पद्रुमं राममहं भजामि ॥५८॥

58. He personifies the cause of all actions and deeds, as well as the reward of such actions or deeds undertaken by a creature. He is boundless, limitless, measureless and without any parameters, as well as is the one who cannot be proved by worldly logics and rationales. He is a 'Kavi' (a poet) par excellence¹. He is the most ancient and primary

Lord mentioned in the Purans (the legendary ancient mythological histories of Hindus). He is the one with enchanting broad lotus-like eyes.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is worthy to be honoured, adored and revered as well as contemplated and meditated upon by exalted sages and seers such as Sanat Kumar and others, who is like an image or personification of the grand virtue of mercy, grace, kindness and compassion, and who is like the Kalpa-tree (the ever-green, all wish-fulfilling tree of Gods) for the purpose of fulfillment of all my wishes as well as the wishes of other devotees (58).

[Note—¹The word *Kavi* literally means a poet, but it implies anyone who is well-lettered, scholarly and erudite; one who is well spoken and an expert with words; one who is learned in the scriptures because the latter have been composed in poetry form comprising of verses called Chandas. These Chandas are poetical forms of composition, having a fixed pattern of lines and the number of letters or words to each line. The Vedas and other scriptures have all been composed in this form.]

त्रैलोक्यनाथं सरसीरुहाक्षं दयानिधिं द्वन्द्वविनाशहेतुम् ।
महाबलं वेदनिधिं सुरेशं सनातनं राममहं भजामि ॥५९॥

59. He is the Lord of the three worlds (i.e. the terrestrial, the celestial and the subterranean worlds; or the entire creation). He is lotus-eyed. He is an ocean of mercy, grace, kindness and compassion. He is the destroyer of all confusions, perplexities, doubts and confoundedness pertaining to the artificial and deluding world.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is the most gallant, valiant, strong and powerful Lord in creation, who is like a treasury of the knowledge contained in the Vedas (i.e. he is an expert in the tenets, axioms, maxims and precepts of the scriptures), who is the Lord of Gods, and who is the Sanaatan Being (i.e. one who is eternal, perpetual, everlasting, primeval, ancient, traditional and absolutely truthful in this creation marked by delusions and falsehoods) (59).

वेदान्तवेद्यं कविमीशितारमनादिमध्यान्तमचिन्त्यमाद्यम् ।
अगोचरं निर्मलमेकरूपं नमामि रामं तमसः परस्तात् ॥६०॥

60. He can be realised, known and understood only through the knowledge given by Vedanta (Upanishads). He is a poet par excellence (i.e. he is most erudite, scholarly, wise and well-lettered). He is endowed with grand virtues and qualities that bestow him with a matchless fame, majesty, power and glory. He is without a beginning, middle or an end (being eternal, infinite and imperishable). He is beyond the scope of comprehension (i.e. he is beyond the imagination, reach and grasp of the mind and intellect). He is the most ancient, first and primary Purush (i.e. the first male aspect of creation known as the Viraat Purush). He is not the object that can be visualized, understood, grasped or

perceived by the creature through any of its sense organs. He is pure, immaculate, uncorrupt and without any blemishes and taints of any kind. He is one, non-dual and without a parallel or comparison. He is the one who is without any hint of darkness caused by ignorance and delusions (i.e. he is most wise, sagacious, erudite, knowledgeable and enlightened).

I most devotedly bow and reverentially honour Lord Ram who has these eclectic and noble virtues and qualities in him (60).

अशेष—वेदात्मकमादिसंज्ञमजं हरिं विष्णुमनन्तमाद्यम् ।
अपारसवित्सुखमेकरूपं परात्परं राममहं भजामि ॥६१॥

61. He has no remainders or fractions (because he is unfractionable, immutable and indivisible whole). He is an image or a personification of all the Vedas and other holy scriptures. He has the unique attribute of not having any beginning or a birth (because he is eternal, imperishable, infinite, everlasting, and present even before and after everything that exists came into being or would end). He is known by different names such as Hari and Vishnu and numerous other names; (in fact, all names of all the creatures in this world are but the different names of the same Lord). He is the primary Purush (who was there even at the beginning of creation, and in fact was the creator of this creation as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme creator known as Brahm). He is fathomless, measureless and infinite, having no end (i.e. it is not possible to see his 'other end'). He is an image of truthful knowledge, erudition and wisdom, as well as of beatitude and felicity. He is the best amongst those who are exalted ones, and is the Supreme Being in the creation.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (61).

तत्त्वस्वरूपं पुरुषं पुराणं स्वतेजसा पूरितविश्वमेकम् ।
राजाधिराजं रविमण्डलस्थं विश्वेश्वरं राममहं भजामि ॥६२॥

62. He is the essence of metaphysics and spiritualism, and personifies these virtues. He is the first and most ancient male, called the Purush (or the Viraat Purush), mentioned in the Purans (mythological histories). He is the one who illuminates the whole world by his astounding glory and the splendour of the divine light radiating out from him much like the celestial Sun lighting up the entire world with its brilliant light. [Here, 'light' represents consciousness, knowledge, intelligence and wisdom as well as the various noble, righteous and auspicious virtues that the Lord stands for.] He is the supreme Lord and Emperor of all the creatures (i.e. of the entire creation). He is irrefutably and unambiguously present in the entire world, forming its core and around whom all life forms revolve, much like the Sun in the sky which forms the axis around which all the planets revolve and on which the life in this visible world depends. He is the Lord of the world as well as of its patron Gods.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (62).

लोकाभिरामं रघुवंशनाथं हरिं चिदानन्दमयं मुकुन्दम् ।
अशेषविद्याधिपतिं कवीन्द्रं नमामि रामं तमसः परस्तात् ॥६३॥

63. He grants happiness and joys to the world, enchants it and keeps it enthralled by his stupendous and magnificent beauty and charm (i.e. not the physical one so much as his uncountable glories, auspicious virtues and noble qualities which are matchless and most astounding). He is the Lord of king Raghu's race. He is known as Hari (one of the numerous names of Lord Vishnu) who is an image of eternal and perpetual bliss and happiness as well as pure and holy as the lotus flower. He does not leave behind any remainders or fractions, as he is whole, complete and indivisible. He is an exalted 'Kavi', literally a poet but implying that the Lord is well-lettered, scholarly and erudite; one who is well spoken, an expert orator and an expert with words; one who is learned in the scriptures (because the latter have been composed in poetry form comprising of verses called Chandas which are poetical forms of composition, having a fixed pattern of lines and the number of letters or words to each line; the Vedas and other scriptures have all been composed in this form). He is free from the darkness induced by ignorance and delusions.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (63).

योगीन्द्रसङ्घैश्च सुसेव्यमानं नारायणं निर्मलमादिदेवम् ।
नतोऽस्मि नित्यं जगदेकनाथमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ॥६४॥

64. He is the best amongst Yogis (ascetics and hermits). He is served (i.e. worshipped and honoured) by great and noble souls (such as sages, seers, hermits, ascetics, friars and monks). He is known as Narayan, the ancient and primeval Lord of creation. [Narayan is one of the numerous names of Vishnu]. He is immaculate, pure and uncorrupt. He is the ancient and traditional Lord of creation who was present in the very beginning of it. He is the one who is perpetual, constant, consistent, eternal, absolute, permanent, ceaseless, immutable, invariable, steady and unchanging. He is the only Lord of the world and has a radiant countenance and splendorous glory which resembles the splendour and radiance of the Sun. He is beyond the reach of the shadow of darkness represented by ignorance and delusions.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (64).

विभूतिदं विश्वसृजं विराजं राजेन्द्रमीशं रघुवंशनाथम् ।
अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमनन्तमूर्तिं ज्योतिर्मयं राममहं भजामि ॥६५॥

65. He bestows 'Vibhuti' (majesty, glory, pomp, favourable circumstance, magnificence, fame, powers, prosperity, fortunes, grandeur and other noble, praise worthy and divine faculties) to his devotees. He is the creator and progenitor of the whole cosmos. He is the final resting place for the creature and its soul. He is the Emperor of kings, and is the Lord of Raghu's clan. He is beyond the imagination and thought processes of the mind and intellect; the latter cannot fathom and understand him. He is an entity that is beyond description or narration (i.e. the faculty of speech is too incompetent to describe or tell anything about him), and this entity has no end (being infinite and eternal). He is self-illuminated and self-radiant (i.e. he is a holy image from which effuses an ethereal light of divinity, holiness, sublimity and piety)

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (65).

अशेष—संसार—विकारहीनमादित्यगं पूर्णसुखाभिरामम् ।
समस्तसाक्षिं तमसः परस्तान्नारायणं विष्णुमहं भजामि ॥६६॥

66. Nothing remains in this world if he is removed from it. [That is, if the Lord is removed from this world, it becomes lifeless and useless, because the Lord is the soul and life of this world.] He is free from all the faults, shortcomings, blemishes, vices and evils associated with this world. He is like the glorious and splendorous Sun. He is the one who bestows all kinds of happiness, joy and bliss to the creature (or his devotees) in this world. He is the eternal and truthful witness for all and for all that is happening. [That is, it is impossible to hide anything from him; no one can deceive the Lord.] He has no stain of darkness symbolizing ignorance and delusions or any other faults associated with this artificial and deluding world. He is an incarnation of Lord Narayan Vishnu.

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (66).

मुनीन्द्रगुह्यं परिपूर्णकामं कलानिधिं कल्मषनाशहेतुम् ।
परात्परं यत्परमं पवित्रं नमामि रामं महतो महान्तम् ॥६७॥

67. He is so mysterious, subtle and enigmatic that only senior and scholarly sages and seers, who are sufficiently wise, erudite and enlightened, are able to know him, are able to realise him and experience his presence, as well as witness his truthful metaphysical essence, divine nature and ethereal sublime form. He is fully contented and fulfilled himself as well as the fulfiller of all the wishes, desires, expectations and aspirations of his devotees. He is a treasure of all arts, crafts, skills and expertise that exist in this creation. He is the destroyer or causes the destruction of all sins and their integrated accumulated effects. He is the best amongst the most exalted ones, and the one who is supreme and transcendental. He is most pure, immaculate, uncorrupt and holy. He is the greatest amongst the great, noblest amongst the noble, the best amongst the good, and

first amongst equals. He is a great, most exalted, supreme, transcendental, ethereal, holy, eclectic and divine being who is a Supreme Being in this creation and greater than the greatest of Lords

I devotedly worship and most reverentially adore Lord Ram who is endowed with these eclectic virtues and divine qualities (67).

ब्रह्मा विष्णुश्च रुद्रश्च देवेन्द्रो देवतास्तथा । आदित्यादि—ग्रहाश्चैव त्वमेव रघुनन्दन! ॥६८॥

68. Oh Raghunandan (Lord Ram)! It is you who are present in myriad forms such as that of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer and protector), Shiva (the annihilator and concluder), Indra (the king of Gods), all other Gods, the Sun and other planets of the solar system, and etc. (68).

[Note—This verse implies that all the Gods are none other but Lord Ram who has assumed as many in order to carry on with the myriad functions of creation.]

तापसा ऋषयः सिद्धाः साध्याश्च मरुतस्तथा । विप्रा वेदास्तथा यज्ञाः पुराण—धर्मसंहिताः ॥६९॥

69. You are a personification of those who do severe Tapa (austerities and penances) as well as of the ancient Rishis (sages and seers) and Siddhas (mystics, the expert ones, the attained ones). You are the object of worship and contemplation. You personify the various Maruts (i.e. the vital life giving wind forces), the Brahmins (the learned and wise class of people), the Vedas (representing the scriptures), the Yagyas (religious sacrifices), the Purans (the ancient mythological histories), the various other treatises called ‘Sanghitas of Dharma’ (i.e. the explanatory volumes which elaborate upon the numerous doctrines of righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct as enshrined in the different scriptures) (69).

वर्णाश्रमास्तथा धर्मा वर्णधर्मास्तथैव च । यक्ष—राक्षस—गन्धर्वा दिक्पाला दिग्गजादयः ॥७०॥

70. You have revealed yourself in myriad of forms in this creation, such as in the form of the four ‘Varnas’¹ (i.e. the four segments in which the society has been classified by the scriptures; these classes are Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras), the four ‘Ashrams’² (i.e. the four periods of life in which a person’s age is divided into; Brahmacharaya, Grishastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas) as well as in the form of ‘Dharma’ (i.e. the eclectic virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, noble and virtuous conduct and thoughts), in the form of the ‘Yaksha’ (a form of semi-God who is the guard of the celestial treasury of Gods), in the form of ‘Raakshas’ or demons, in the form of ‘Gandharva’ (a semi-God who is the celestial musician of the Gods and considered to be great at playing tricks), in the form of ‘Diggaj’ (the eight mythological

elephants who hold the earth aloft at eight strategic points; the word refers to one who is matchless in his stupendous valour, strength, courage, steadfastness and prowess), and in the form of the 'Digpaals' (the custodians of the corners of the world) etc.

All of them are but various manifestations of your one, indivisible, single self, i.e. they are none other but you in all these myriad forms that you have chosen to assume (70).

[Note—¹The four *Varnas*—The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

²The four *Ashrams*—The life of a Hindu man is divided into four segments or Ashrams—(a) Brahmacharya —this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) Grihastha —when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vanprastha —this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas —this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called ‘Ashramo-panishad’ belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.]

सनकादि—मुनिश्रेष्ठास्त्वमेव रघुपुङ्गव! । वसवोऽष्टौ त्रयः काला रुद्रा एकादश स्मृताः ॥७१॥

71. Sages Sankadi and others who are the best amongst the sages, the eight Vasu, the three Kaals (i.e. the past, the present and the future time), and the eleven Rudras are none other but you in those forms (71).

तारका दशदिक् चैव त्वमेव रघुनन्दन! । सप्तद्वीपाः समुद्राश्च नागा नद्यस्तथा द्रुमाः ॥७२॥

72. Oh Raghunandan (Lord Ram)! The stars, the ten directions, the seven continents, the oceans, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, the snakes and other reptiles—all of them are your varied forms (or you have revealed yourself in all these myriad forms) (72).

स्थावरा जङ्गमाश्चैव त्वमेव रघुनायक! । देव—तिर्यङ्—मनुष्याणां दानवानां तथैव च ॥७३॥

73. Oh Raghunayak (literally, the leader of the king Raghu’s race)! The animate as well as the inanimate world, the Gods, the animal and the birds, the demons, the humans—all of them are nothing else but your various forms (73).

माता पिता तथा भ्राता त्वमेव रघुवल्लभ! । सर्वेषां त्वं परं ब्रह्म त्वन्मयं सर्वमेव हि ॥७४॥

74. Oh the dear Lord of the Raghu’s race (i.e. Lord Ram)! You are the father, the mother, and the brother of all. You are the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. The whole world is pervaded by you and you encompass it from all the sides (i.e. you are omnipresent and you uniformly pervade in this world, being present both inside it as well as outside it) (74).

[Note--To understand this latter concept, we can visualise a sponge or a ball of fluffy cotton in water. The water is present both inside as well as outside the sponge or the ball of cotton.]

त्वमक्षरं परं ज्योतिस्त्वमेव पुरुषोत्तम! । त्वमेव तारकं ब्रह्म त्वत्तोऽन्यत्रैव किञ्चन ॥७५॥

75. You are the imperishable One who does not decay, disintegrate, crumble or come to an end at any point of time. You are the supreme transcendental Being who is self-illuminated and self-radiant. You are indeed the best and most exalted Male (Purushottam) in creation. [This is a reference to the Viraat Purush, or the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme Brahm from whom the rest of the visible creation was revealed.]

You are the 'Tarak Brahm' (i.e. the supreme transcendental Being who provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature from this humdrum, artificial, deluding and ignorant ridden world of miseries and torments associated with an endless cycle of birth and death, and provide it with emancipation and salvation). There is nothing in this creation that is not you; you pervade throughout the length and breadth of this creation (75).

शान्तं सर्वगतं सूक्ष्मं परं ब्रह्म सनातनम् । राजीवलोचनं रामं प्रणमामि जगत्पतिम् ॥७६॥

76. He who is calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil by temperament, is all-pervading, all-incorporating and omnipresent, is minute, subtle, esoteric, enigmatic and mystical in nature and form, is the traditionally and universally truthful, eternal, perpetual, primeval, and most ancient supreme transcendental Brahm, is lotus-eyed, and is the Lord of the whole world—I most reverentially and respectfully bow and pay my obeisance to Lord Ram who has these eclectic virtues and qualities' (76).

व्यास उवाच

ततः प्रसन्नः श्रीरामः प्रोवाच मुनिपुङ्गवम् । तुष्टोऽस्मि मुनिशार्दूल! वृणीष्व वरमुत्तमम् ॥७७॥

77. Sage Veda Vyas said, 'When Narad had prayed to Lord Ram as above, the latter was very pleased with him and said—'Oh the most exalted sage (Narad), oh the lion amongst sages (i.e. one who is like a king amongst his peers)! I am very pleased with you. Ask for the boon that you desire' (77).

नारद उवाच

यदि तुष्टोऽसि सर्वज्ञ! श्रीराम करुणानिधे! । त्वन्मूर्तिं दर्शिनैव कृतार्थोऽहं च सर्वदा ॥७८॥

78. Sage Narad replied, 'Oh Lord Ram! You are all-knowing, omniscient, merciful, kind, graceful and compassionate. If you are indeed pleased with me then I am grateful and privileged in having your 'Darshan' (i.e. having a divine, holy, august and auspicious view or sight) (78).

धन्योऽहं कृतकृत्योऽहं पुण्योऽहं पुरुषोत्तम! । अद्य म सफलं जन्म जीवितं सफलं च मे ॥७९॥

79. Oh Purushottam (the best and the most exalted amongst men—i.e. Lord Ram)! By having your 'Darshan' today, I feel extremely thankful, honoured, privileged, grateful and fortunate. I feel that my birth has been fully rewarded, and my life has been successful (79).

अद्य मे सफलं ज्ञानमद्य मे सफलं तपः । अद्य मे सफलं कर्म त्वत्पादाम्भोज—दर्शनात् ॥८०॥

80. By having you're the 'Darshan' of your august and holy feet today, all the virtuous deeds that I have done, all the knowledge and education that I have acquired, all the severe sufferance, austerities and penances etc. that I have done, are duly rewarded and deemed to be fully successful. [That is, the best reward that one can ever expect by doing anything auspicious and holy is to have a communion with the supreme Lord Ram, which has been made available to Narad. No reward can match this privilege. There is nothing more that he expects.] (80).

अद्य मे सफलं सर्वं त्वन्नामस्मरणात्तथा । त्वत्पादाम्भोरुहद्वन्द्वं सद्भक्तिं देहि राघव! ॥८१॥

81. Oh Raghav (Lord Ram)! Everything is successful for me and I am amply rewarded today for having remembered your holy name. I do not want anything more except having steady and true devotion and submission for your holy and august feet. Hence oh Lord, if you are indeed pleased with me, then grant this boon to me' (81).

ततः परमसम्प्रीतः स रामः प्राह नारदम् ।

श्रीराम उवाच

मुनिवर्य्य! महाभाग! मुने! त्विष्टं ददामि ते । यत्त्वया चेप्सितं सर्वं मनसा तद् भविष्यति ॥८२॥

82. Thence, Lord Ram was extremely pleased with Narad and said to him, 'Oh the most exalted sage, oh the most fortunate one! I grant you your desired boon—whatever you wish now, or will ever wish in future, shall be made available to you (i.e. all your desires will be fulfilled)' (82).

नारद उवाच

वरं न याचे रघुनाथ युष्मत्पादाब्जभक्तिः सततं ममाऽस्तु ।

इदं प्रियं नाथ! वरं प्रयाचे पुनः पुनस्त्वामिदमेव याचे ॥८३॥

83. Sage Narad replied, 'Oh Raghunath (Lord Ram)! I do not ask you for any boon except that I must have sincere, unfaltering and steady devotion in your lotus-like holy feet. Oh Lord! This is the only boon that I repeatedly seek from you' (83).

व्यास उवाच

इत्येवमीडितो रामः प्रादात्तस्मै वरोत्तमम् । वीरो राम महातेजाः सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ॥८४॥

84. Sage Veda Vyas said, 'In the above way, when Narad had prayed to Lord Ram who is most valiant and brave, most glorious, majestic, radiant and splendorous with his divine holiness, and who is an image of truthful and eternal bliss and felicity, granted Narad with the excellent boon that the latter desired to have granted (which was to have steady and unfaltering devotion for the Lord and submission in his holy and august feet) (84).

अद्वैतममलं ज्ञानं त्वन्नामस्मरणं तथा । अन्तर्दधे जगन्नाथः पुरतस्तस्य राघवः ॥८५॥

85. After blessing Narad with the divine awareness of the ethereal supreme and transcendental entity called Brahm, and granting him the boon of having eternal devotion for his holy and divine name, Lord Ram vanished from sight of Narad (85).

इति श्रीरघुनाथस्य स्तवराजमनुत्तमम् । सर्वसौभाग्य—सम्पत्तिदायकं मुक्तिदं शुभम् ॥८६॥

86. This excellent hymn dedicated to the Lord who is the most exalted One in the race of king Raghu (of Ayodhya), a hymn known as 'Stavaraj', has the stupendous and mystical potential of bestowing all sorts of imaginable good fortunes and prosperity, all round welfare and auspiciousness, as well as emancipation and salvation to the devotee (86).

कथितं ब्रह्मपुत्रेण वेदानां सारमुत्तमम् । गुह्याद् गुह्यतमं दिव्यं तव स्नेहात्प्रकीर्तितम् ॥८७॥

87. This divine and holy Stotra (Ram-Stavaraj) was pronounced by none other than the son of Brahma (i.e. sage Narad). It contains the essence of all the Vedas and their secret knowledge. I have brought it to light out of affection for you (87).

यः पठेच्छृणुयाद्वाऽपित्रिसन्ध्यं श्रद्धयाऽन्वितः । ब्रह्महत्यादि—पापानि तत्समानि बहूनि च ॥८८॥
स्वर्णस्तयं सुरापानं गुरुतल्पगतिस्तथा । गोवधाद्युपपापानि अनृतात् सम्भवानि च ॥८९॥

88-89. Benefits—Those faithful devotees who will read, recite or hear this Stotra (i.e. Ram-Stavaraj) three times in the day (i.e. in the morning, during the noon and in the evening hours), shall be freed from the evil effects of all small or big sins and misdeeds committed by them, such as the killing of a Brahmin, theft of gold, drinking wine, sitting on the seat of the teacher, killing of a cow, and telling a lie. All such sins, misdeeds and misdemeanors and their incumbent punishments shall be remitted or pardoned or literally destroyed or eliminated by the good affects of this Stotra (88-89).

[Note—It is a standard practice in ancient literature that such blanket pardoning is prescribed for all sinners who have devotion for a particular chosen deity to whom a specific hymn is dedicated. This does not give them the license to commit murder and slaughter of innocents, felony and larceny, indulgence and debauchery, and sins of all other imaginable kinds, with the assurance that forgiveness is easy, automatic and round the corner. No, never. The idea is that if one had committed these sins and sincerely regrets for them, then some avenue must be open for their redemption, for to err is human. If a man sincerely wishes to repent and mend himself, then he should be given a chance, otherwise he would go on committing the same horrific act over and over again because there is no way to undo his mistakes.]

सर्वैः प्रमुच्यते पापैः कलायुत—शतोद्भवैः । मानसं वाचिकं पापं कर्मणा समुपार्जितम् ॥९०॥

90. In a similar way, a person is able to get rid of all his sins committed over numerous 'Kalpas' (eras; a long period of time) by his body, mind or speech along with their accumulated punishments (if he follows the directions given above and has devotion for Lord Ram) (90).

[Note—1 Kalpa is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yog cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.

Each Kalpa (i.e. 1 day of Brahma's life) is also divided into 14 Manvantars, and each such Manvantars is ruled by one Manu, the first male. Therefore, 1 Manu rules over 71.42 (1000/4) four-Yug cycles.

We are now passing through the 51st year of Brahma's life, and our present Kaliyug belongs to the 7th Manvantar out of the 14 Manvantars, and its Manu is called Vaivasvata, and it is 28th Kaliyug of the four-Yug cycle.

In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion (4.32 x 109) years.]

श्रीरामस्मरणेनैव तत्क्षणान् नश्यति ध्रुवम् । इदं सत्यमिदं सत्यं सत्यमेतदिहोच्यते ॥९१॥

रामं सत्यं परं ब्रह्म रामात् किञ्चिन्न विद्यते । तस्माद्रामस्वरूपं हि सत्यं सत्यमिदं जगत् ॥९२॥

91-92. All the sins and their accumulated bad effects will be immediately destroyed by the mere remembrance of Lord Ram's holy and divine name (with sincerity, earnestness and devotion). This is undoubtedly an absolute, truthful and irrefutable certainty.

Besides this, it is also an absolute truth that Lord Ram is the eternal, truthful, supreme, transcendental and the ultimate Brahm. There is nothing that is not Lord Ram (or there is nothing in this creation that is besides Lord Ram, or which is not pervaded by Lord Ram, or which is not an image of Lord Ram, or which is different from and independent of Lord Ram). Hence, this world appears to be true because of the fact that Lord Ram is the ultimate Truth, and this world is a manifestation of this Lord known as Brahm, the Supreme Being' (91-92).

सूत उवाच

श्रीरामचन्द्र रघुपुङ्गव राजवर्य! राजेन्द्र राम रघुनायक राघवेश! ।
राजाधिराजरघुनन्दन! रामचन्द्र! दासोऽहमद्य भवतः शरणागतोऽस्मि ॥९३॥

93. Sage Sut said, 'Oh Lord Ramchandra, oh the most exalted in the race of king Raghu, oh the most exalted king, oh the Emperor amongst kings, oh Lord Ram the leader of Raghu's race, oh the King of kings, oh an exalted son of the Raghu's race Lord Ram! I am your humble servant (i.e. your devotee) and have taken refuge/shelter in your holy feet (93).

वैदेही—सहितं सुरद्रुमतले हेमैर्महामण्डपे मध्ये पुष्पकृतासने मणिमये वीरासने संस्थितम् ।
अग्रे वाचयति प्रभञ्जनसुते तत् त्वं मुनीन्द्रैः परं व्याख्यातं भरतादिभिः परिवृतं रामं भजे श्यामलम् ॥९४॥

94. Accompanied by Vaidehi (Sita), Lord Ram is seated on a throne covered with flowers under the Kalpa tree (the evergreen celestial tree of Gods) in a golden pavilion. Hanuman is standing in front of him singing the sacred hymns which have been composed by erudite sages and seers and highlights the knowledge of the supreme Brahm. Lord Ram is surrounded by Bharat and other brothers. He is dark complexioned. I adore and worship Lord Ram in this form (94).

रामं रत्न—किरीट—कुण्डलयुतं केयूर—हारान्वितं सीताऽलङ्कृत—वामभागममलं सिंहासनस्थं विभुम् ।
सुग्रीवादि—हरीश्वरैः सुरगणैः संसेव्यमानं सदा विश्वामित्र—पराशरादि—मुनिभिः संस्तूयमानं प्रभुम् ॥९५॥

95. I praise and honour Lord Ram who has a crown and a tiara made of precious stones/gems on his head, wears ear-rings, and has armbands on his arms and a necklace around his neck. Sita adorns (i.e. is seated on) his left side. He is seated on a magnificent and gleaming throne, is known by the name of Vibho (an epithet of Vishnu meaning omnipresent, magnanimous, eternal, almighty and majestic Lord), is served by Sugriv

and other monkeys, and is praised and honoured by sages such as Vishwamitra and Parashar (95).

सकल—गुण—निधानं योगिभिः स्तूयमानं भुज—विजित—समानं राक्षसेन्द्रादिमानम् ।
महितनृपभयानं सीतया शोभमानं स्मर हृदय विमानं ब्रह्म रामाभिधानम् ॥९६॥

96. Lord Ram is a treasury of all auspicious virtues and noble characters, is revered, honoured and praised by the Yogis (ascetics/hermits), was able to vanquish and crush the pride, haughtiness and arrogance of the demons by the dint of his matchless valour, stupendous strength and astounding powers, is privileged to have Sita by his side, is the one who trounces the pride of kings, is the one who humbles the heart of Kamdeo-cupid (i.e. he makes Kamdeo feel shy and humiliated when the latter compares himself with Lord Ram's enchanting spell), and who is the supreme Brahm himself with the divine name of 'Ram'. I bow before such a Lord Ram most reverentially and devotedly (96).

रघुवर! तव मूर्तिर्मामके मानसाब्जे नरकगतिहरं ते नामधेयं मुखे मे ।
अनिशमतुलभक्त्या मस्तकं त्वत्पदाब्जं भवजलनिधिमग्नं रक्ष मामार्त्तबन्धो! ॥९७॥

97. Oh Raghuvar (Lord Ram)! Let your enchanting and bewitching image be permanently enshrined in my heart, let your holy and divine name which has the potential to destroy the chances of going to hell be ever present in my mouth (i.e. let me constantly, persistently and consistently chant or repeat your august name), and let my head always remain bowed at your holy lotus-like feet with devotion and humility. Oh Lord and friend of the distressed, wretched and miserable ones! By fulfilling my above mentioned wishes, be kind and gracious enough to deliver me from this entrapping, artificial and deluding world in which I find my self trapped and engrossed (97).

रामरत्नमहं वन्दे चित्रकूटपतिं हरिम् । कौशल्याभक्तिसम्भूतं जानकीकण्ठभूषणम् ॥९८॥

इति श्रीराम—रहस्ये सनत्कुमार—संहितायां नारदोक्तश्रीरामस्तवराजं सम्पूर्णम् ।

98. I honour, revere, worship and praise the jewel called Ram who is the Lord Hari, the king of Chitrakoot¹. He is born because of the devotion of Kaushalaya (his mother), and is like a symbolic ornamentation for the neck of Janki (Sita)² (98).

[Note—¹Chitrakoot is the place where Lord Ram had spent considerable time during his time in forest exile, and it was here that Bharat, his younger brother, had gone to try to persuade him to come back to Ayodhya. It is said that the Lord always stays in the forests surrounding this holy place.

²He is like an invaluable and precious necklace which adorns the bosom of Sita. The allusion to a necklace signifies that even as a woman's beauty and charm is enhanced by her jewelry—chiefly her necklace because it is the central piece of all her ornaments, lying prominently around her neck and placed on her bosom to show off her beauty and charm, and this piece of ornamentation has a pride of place on her body because it symbolically lies close to her heart as it is placed right above it on the chest—Lord Ram too is the greatest and most valuable possession that Sita has. Without him, she would be bare of any honour and decoration.]

Thus ends Ram Stavaraj Stotra sung by Narad in Sanatkumar Sanhita.

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Ram Stotra (Hymn by Jatau, the Bird)

This Stotra (hymn) by Jatau appears in Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 44-53.

जटायुरूवाच
अगणितगुणमप्रमेयमाद्यं सकल जगत्स्थितिसंयमादिहेतुम्।
उपरमपरमं परात्मभूतं सततमहं प्रणतोऽस्मि रामचन्द्रम्॥४४॥

44. Jatau said (prayed), 'I remain perpetually bowed in great reverence before Sri Ramchandra who has (possesses, is endowed with) immeasurable auspicious virtues and good characteristics, who is boundless, measureless, limitless and without any parameters, who is the original cause of creation, its sustenance and its ultimate annihilation, who is an embodiment of supreme peace, tranquility and serenity, and is the most exalted and supreme Soul in the creation, called the Parmatma (44).

निरवधिसुखमिन्दिराकटाक्षं क्षपितसुरेन्द्रचतुर्मुखादिदुःखम्।
नरवरमनिशं नतोऽस्मि रामं वरदमहं वरचापबाणहस्तम्॥४५॥

45. I bow most reverentially day and night before Sri Ram who is an embodiment (or treasury, an abode) of and remains submerged in measureless bliss, happiness and joys, who is the object of affectionate side-glances of Laxmi, who is the remover of the miseries, grief, troubles and tribulations of the Lord of Gods (Indra) as well as of the

four-headed Lord (Brahma) and other Gods, who is the best among humans and bestows boons, and who holds a bow and arrows in his hands (45).

त्रिभुवनकमनीयरूपमीड्यं रविशतभासुरमीहितप्रदानम् ।
शरणदमनिशं सुरागमूले कृतनिलयं रघुनन्दनं प्रपद्ये ॥४६॥

46. I bow most reverentially to and take shelter in the holy feet of Raghunandan (Sri Ram) who is the most beautiful, astoundingly attractive, enchantingly captivating and stupendously charming in the whole of the three worlds (subterranean, terrestrial and celestial), who is worthy of being praised, revered and honoured by all, who is as splendidous, radiant and glorious as hundreds of Suns taken together, who bestows (gives, grants) all the desired or deserved fruits or rewards (to his devotees), who constantly, day and night, gives shelter and refuge in his holy feet to those who seek it, and who resides in their affectionate and loveable hearts (46).

भवविपिनदवाग्निनामधेयं भवमुखदैवतदैवतं दयालुम् ।
दनुजपतिसहस्रकोटिनाशं रवितनयासदृशं हरिं प्रपद्ये ॥४७॥

47. I bow most reverentially to and take shelter in the holy feet of Hari (Sri Ram) whose potent holy name resembles a powerful wild fire for the purpose of destroying this world which is like a dense and impenetrable forest, who is the supreme God who is revered, honoured and worshipped even by Lord Shiva and other Gods, who is the crusher and vanquisher of crores (millions) of demons and their kings, who is dark complexioned like the waters of the holy river Yamuna, and who is most gracious, kind, benevolent, merciful and compassionate (47).

अविरतभवभावनातिदूरं भवविमुखैर्मुनिभिः सदैव दृश्यम् ।
भवजलधिसुतारणाङ्घ्रिपोतं शरणमहं रघुनन्दनं प्रपद्ये ॥४८॥

48. I bow most reverentially to and take shelter in the holy feet of Raghunandan (Sri Ram) who is perpetually far away from the reach of and sight of (i.e. inaccessible to) those who are regularly, as a matter of habit, natural inclination and temperament, passionately involved with, are infatuated with, are emotionally attached with, are insatiably attracted to, have an unsatisfied yearning for, are madly running behind and seeking wistfully this material world of artificiality and its illusive comforts. On the other hand, he is always easily visible (accessible, attainable) to those exalted sages, seers, hermits, ascetics and other exalted, realised and holy ones who are detached, uninterested, indifferent and dispassionate towards this world (i.e. who have renounced their link with this artificial and elusive ensnaring world. The holy and divine feet of the

Lord are like a ship (or boat) to take one across the ocean of this mundane, deluding, artificial and ensnaring world (48).

गिरिशगिरिसुतामनोनिवासं गिरिवरधारिणीमीहिताभिरामम् ।
सुरवरदनुजेन्द्रसेविताङ्घ्रिं सुरवरदं रघुनायकं प्रपद्ये ॥४९॥

49. I bow most reverentially to and take shelter in the holy feet of Sri Raghunayak (literally, the exalted leader of Raghu's clan; Sri Ram) who resides in the temple-like heart of Lord Shiva and Parvati and is their well-wisher. His character, nature, conduct, behaviour, general demeanours, habits and temperaments, both the worldly as well as the heavenly, are extremely enchanting and pleasant (besides being stellar examples of divinity, holiness, piety, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality of the highest order). His holy feet are served (worshipped, adored, honoured) both by the most exalted Gods as well as the king of demons. He is that supreme authority that grants boons even to the Gods (49).

परधनपरदारवर्जितानां परगुणभूतिषु तुष्टमानसानाम् ।
परहितनिरतात्मनां सुसेव्यं रघुवरमम्बुजलोचनं प्रपद्ये ॥५०॥

50. I bow most reverentially to and take shelter in the holy feet of the lotus-eyed Raghubar (Sri Ram) who is being constantly served by those great noble souls who keep far away from (abhor, detest, never think of, or eye) the wealth, property and women of others. On the contrary, they feel very glad, happy and contented at the virtues, excellence, goodness, glory, prosperity, well-being and success of others, and are always eager for their welfare and well-being (50).

स्मितरुचिरविकासिताननाब्जमतिसुलभं सुरराजनीलनीलम् ।
सितजलरुहचारुनेत्रशोभं रघुपतिमीशगुगुरुं प्रपद्ये ॥५१॥

51. I bow most reverentially to and take shelter in the holy feet of Sri Raghupati (Sri Ram) who is the great Guru (moral preceptor) of Lord Shiva! His charming and attractive face is like a fully blossomed lotus flower and is adorned with a bewitching smile that is most attractive, endearing, genteel and charming for the heart, who is most easily accessible to his devotees, the radiant glow of whose body (i.e. his complexion) is beautifully tinged with a bluish hue like that of the 'Indra Neel Mani' (sapphire worn by Indra), and whose enchanting eyes are as adorable, fascinating, magnificent and charming as a white lotus (51).

हरिकमलजशम्भुरूपभेदात्त्वमिह विभासि गुणत्रयानुवृत्तः ।

रविरिव जलपूरितोदपात्रेष्वमरपतिस्तुतिपात्रमीशमीडे ॥५२॥

52. It is you who appear in the three forms of Hari (Vishnu, the sustainer), the one who was born atop a divine lotus (Brahma, the creator), and Shambhu (Shiva, the concluder of creation) due to the predominance of any one of the three 'Gunas' over the others, even as the same sun appears to be different and numerous when it is reflected in a number of pans filled with water.

I sing a hymn in your honour who are worthy of being praised, revered and honoured even by Indra (the king of Gods), and are a personification of the supreme transcendental Lord (52).

रतिपतिशतकोटिसुन्दराङ्गं शतपथगोचरभावनाविदूरम् ।
यतिपतिहृदये सदा विभातं रघुपतिमार्तिहरं प्रभुं प्रपद्ये ॥५३॥

53. Your divine body is more stunningly and magnificently charming, attractive, handsome, magnificent, radiant and endowed with a divine glow than that of crores (millions) of Kamdeo-cupids (literally the husband of Rati) taken collectively. You are very far away from or inaccessible to those who are confused and perplexed by, or remain entangled in, the web representing pursuit of hundreds of paths or means leading to attainment of emancipation and salvation, instead of concentrating on the righteous and correct path leading to the awareness of your truthful and real form (as described in the Shathpath Brahman of the Shukla Yajur Veda and expounded and elucidated in the Brihad Aranykya Upanishad of that Veda). [That is, you are attainable by realising your true form by following the righteous path of self realisation and devotion as affirmed in the Upanishads.] You are always present and experienced by exalted ascetics in their hearts. I bow most reverentially at the holy and venerated feet of great Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) who is such a benevolent and unparalleled eliminator of miseries, grief, distress, agonies, troubles and tribulations of all kinds' (53).

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Ram Stotra (Hymn by Indra, the king of Gods)

This Stotra (hymn) by Indra appears in Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uddha (Lanka) Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 24-32.

इन्द्र उवाच
भजेऽहं सदा राममिन्दीवराभं भवारण्यदावानलाभाभिधानम् ।
भवानीहृदा भावितानन्दरूपं भवाभावहेतुं भवादिप्रपन्नम् ॥२४॥

24. Indra said—I always worship, honour and adore Sri Ram who looks most elegant, dignified, majestic and beautiful with a blue countenance like that of a blue-lotus, whose name is like a wild forest fire for the purpose of burning or destroying this materialistic, delusory, artificial and ensnaring mundane world which is like wild and dense forest (i.e. his holy and powerful name can burn the allurements and entrapments that this world presents to the soul diverting, it from its real goal of emancipation and salvation), whose blissful, most cheerful, enchanting and tranquil image/form is meditated upon by Bhavani in her heart (in other words, the blissful and pleasant image/form of Sri Ram resides in the heart of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva), and who is the liberator from the fetters that shackle a creature to this world (consisting of a vicious, never ending cycle of birth and death; he is a medium by which one can free oneself from this world and its shackles). I bow reverentially before Sri Ram who is the refuge or shelter for Lord Shiva and other Gods (24).

सुरानीकदुःखौघनाशैकहेतुं नराकारदेहं निराकारमीड्यम् ।
परेण परानन्दरूपं वरेण्यं हरिं राममीशं भजे भारनाशम् ॥२५॥

25. He is the only medium by which all the miseries, distresses, sorrows and torments of the Gods etc. are destroyed or eliminated. He is presently in the form of a human, though he is primarily without a form and is worthy of being praised and honoured through the medium of prayers. I worship, revere and adore that Lord Sri Ram who is the supreme Lord and the one who removes the burden of the earth, who is an image of supreme, eternal and immutable bliss, happiness, joy, peace and tranquility, who is worthy of being praised, honoured, revered and worshipped, and is Lord Hari (Vishnu) himself personified (25).

प्रपन्नाखिलानन्ददोहं प्रपन्नं प्रपन्नार्तिनिःशेषनाशाभिधानम् ।
तपोयोगयोगीशभावाभिभाव्यं कपीशादिमित्रं भजे राममित्रम् ॥२६॥

26. He who is the shelter and provider of eternal happiness and succour of all kinds to those who seek refuge with him; he whose name removes or destroys all types of miseries, sorrows, torments, tribulations, anguish and their likes of those humble devotees who have sought his shelter; who is the object of severe penances and austerities (Tapa), of deep meditation, concentration and contemplation (Yoga), and of thought and search by great and attained Yogis (ascetics); and who is a friend of the king of monkeys etc. (i.e. Sugriv and his ministers)—I adore, worship, honour and revere that Sri Ram who is a true and loyal friend personified (i.e. he is a sincere friend of all, or I worship him as my true and sincere friend because he has given me succour from the horrible torments that I was being subjected to by Ravana as a true and loyal friend) (26).

सदा भोगभाजां सुदूरे विभान्तं सदा योगभाजामदूरे विभान्तम्।
चिदानन्दकन्दं सदा राघवेशं विदेहात्मजानन्दरूपं प्रपद्ये॥२७॥

27. He keeps far away from people who are always indulgent and engrossed in pleasures of the sense organs and the objects of the materialistic world, while residing in the proximity and easy reach of those who are always firm in Yoga and self-restraint. He is an eternal and everlasting treasury or a root of eternal beatitude and felicity. He is an image and source of happiness, joy and delight for the daughter of Vaideha (i.e. Sita). I always worship, revere, honour and adore Sri Ram who has been born in the clan of king Raghu (27).

महायोगमायाविशेषानुयुक्तो विभासीश लीलानराकारवृत्तिः।
त्वदानन्दलीलाकथापूर्णकर्णाः सदानन्दरूपा भवन्तीह लोके॥२८॥

28. You appear like a human being (or are in the form of an ordinary man) out of your own wish and just for the sake of fun or playful activity. While assuming this form, you have also assumed the characteristics and attributes of a human that you seem to possess by virtue of your own great deluding powers called Maya. That is, you have joined hands with your Maya, and this company has created an illusion that you are a human being and have all the attributes of a human being.

Those people whose ears get constantly filled by hearing your divine stories which bestow them with happiness and joy as well as bliss and peace, are the ones who become images or stellar examples of constant, persistent and consistent contentedness, joy, bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness (28).

अहं मानपानाभिमतप्रमत्तो न वेदाखिलेशाभिमानाभिमानः।
इदानीं भवत्पादपङ्कजप्रसादात् त्रिलोकाधिपत्याभिमानो विनष्टः॥२९॥

29. Oh Lord! I had become intoxicated, haughty, proud, boastful and arrogant due to honours, respect, stature and privileges that I had as the king of Gods as well as by indulgence in drinking Soma (which is the elixir like drink offered to Gods during fire sacrifices). I cared for none due to my arrogance, pride and haughtiness of being all in all (or the Lord) of the entire world. Now, with the grace and kindness of your lotus-like divine and holy feet, my haughtiness, arrogance and vanity of being the master and Lord of the three worlds has been eliminated and destroyed. [The three worlds are— the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean worlds.] (29).

स्फुरद्भक्तकेयूरहाराभिरामं धराभारभूतासुरानीकदावम् ।
शरच्चन्द्रवक्त्रं लसत्पङ्कजेन दुरावारपारं भजे राघवेशम्॥३०॥

30. He who is adorned with glittering gem-studded arm bands and necklaces and looks most magnificent, handsome, elegant, enchanting and beautiful in them, who is like a wild fire for the destructions of demons who are a burden for this earth, whose auspicious face and countenance resembles a full Moon of a winter night, and whose eyes are as beautiful, enchanting, enamouring and attractive as a beautiful lotus flower, and whose beginning or end is most difficult to ascertain—I adore, worship, honour and revere such a Raghav (Sri Ram) (30).

सुराधीशनीलाभ्रनीलाङ्गकान्तिं विराधादिरक्षोवधाल्लोकशान्तिम्।
किरीटादिशोभं पुरातिलाभं भजे रामचन्द्रं रघूणामधीशम्॥३१॥

31. He whose body has the ethereal radiance and divine glow resembling that of the 'Indra Neel Mani' (a blue sapphire worn by Lord of Gods, Indra, as a crown jewel) and is as dark as the (rain bearing) cloud, who had protected all the creatures by slaying the demon Viradh etc. to establish peace, tranquility and order in this world, who is adorned by a crown and a tiara etc., and who is the valuable asset and a valued treasure of Lord Shiva—I adore, worship, honour, praise and revere such a Sri Ramchandra who is the Lord of the clan of Raghu (31).

लसच्चन्द्रकोटिप्रकाशादिपीठे समासीनमङ्गे समाधाय सीताम्।
स्फुरद्धेमवर्णा तडित्पुञ्जभासां भजे रामचन्द्रं निवृत्तार्तितन्द्रम्॥३२॥

32. He is sitting on a magnificent throne which is as glorious, splendourous, radiant and marvelous as millions of moons shining together with Sita by his side. She has a complexion as glowing and radiant as pure gold, and as splendourous, brilliant and dazzling as lightening. I adore, worship, honour, praise and revere such a Sri Ramchandra who is beyond the purview of any sorrows, anguish and distress as well as is without any sluggishness, inertia, indolence, lethargy, careless and apathetic attitude (i.e. he is most vigilant, alert, active and agile)' (32).

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Ram Stotra (Hymn by Vibhishan, the noble demon king of Lanka)

This Stotra (hymn) by Vibhishan appears in Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uddha (Lanka) Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 17-32.

विभीषण उवाच

नमस्ते राम राजेन्द्र नमः सीतामनोरम। नमस्ते चण्डकोदण्ड नमस्ते भक्तवत्सल॥१७॥

17. Vibhishan said, 'Oh the King of kings, Sri Ram! I bow before you (to pay my respects and honour). Oh the one who resides in the heart of Sita! I bow reverentially before you. Oh the invincible and formidable archer holding an invincible and formidable bow! I bow reverentially before you. Oh the one who is compassionate, benevolent, munificent, benignant and endearing towards his devotees! I bow reverentially before you (17).

नमोऽनन्ताय शान्ताय रामायामिततेजसे। सुग्रीवमित्राय च ते रघूणां पतये नमः॥१८॥

18. I bow before Sri Ram who has no end, is tranquil, peaceful and serene, is unique and matchless in divine splendour, radiance, brilliance, glow of divine energy and majestic powers, is a friend of Sugriv, and is the leader of king Raghu's clan (18).

जगदुत्पत्तिनाशानां कारणाय महात्मने। त्रैलोक्यगुरवेऽनादिगृहस्थाय नमो नमः॥१९॥

19. I repeatedly bow reverentially before you who are a great and exalted soul, are the cause (source) of the creation as well as annihilation of the world, are the Guru (a wise and enlightened teacher, a moral preceptor, an erudite and learned guide, and the one who is the most wise and enlightened) of the Triloki (the three worlds consisting of the subterranean, terrestrial and celestial worlds), and are a householder since time immemorial (19).

त्वमादिर्जगतां राम त्वमेव स्थितिकारणम्। त्वमन्ते निधनस्थानं स्वेच्छाचारस्त्वमेव हि॥२०॥

20. Oh Sri Ram! You are the cause of creation and existence of this world, and at the end of it you are the place where it goes back (i.e. merges into or coalesces into) at the time of annihilation (the doomsday). You move around as per your own wish (20).

चराचराणां भूतानां बहिरन्तश्च राघव। व्याप्यव्यापकरूपेण भवान् भाति जगन्मयः॥२१॥

21. Oh Raghav (Sri Ram)! You pervade both inside and outside the whole creation consisting of the five elements (space, air, fire, water, earth). [That is, you encompass as well as are encompassed by all the animate as well as the inanimate world which is made up of the above elements.]

As a result, the whole universe appears to be a manifestation of your own self, or it is an image which reflects you (21).

त्वन्मायया हतज्ञाना नष्टोत्मानो विचेतसः। गतागतं प्रपद्यन्ते पापपुण्यवशात्सदा॥२२॥

22. Those foolish, lowly, stupid and ignorant persons, whose wisdom, intelligence and discrimination powers have been eclipsed by your deluding and illusive force called Maya, are constantly and repeatedly arriving and departing, i.e. take birth and die repeatedly in this mundane, artificial, deluding and entrapping world depending upon their righteous or unrighteous deeds, thoughts and demeanors (22).

तावत्सत्यं जगद्भाति शुक्तिकारजतं यथा। यावन्न ज्ञायते ज्ञानं चेतसानन्यगामिना॥२३॥

23. As long as (i.e. till the time) a person does not concentrate his mental faculties and realises and understands your true form representing pure enlightenment, wisdom and knowledge as well as the pure consciousness, he continues to regard this world as being true just like one mistakenly thinks that there is silver that glistens inside an oyster shell. [The moon or sun light reflects from the oyster shell's inner layer and it appears to shimmer with a silvery light, but it is only an optical illusion.] (23).

त्वदज्ञानात्सदा युक्ताः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु। रमन्ते विषयान्सर्वान्ते दुःखप्रदान्विभो॥२४॥

24. Oh Vibho (omnipresent, almighty, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal Lord)! It is because the people are ignorant of you and your true form that they are engrossed in and infatuated and attached with their worldly ties such as their sons, wives and homestead etc., and try to find happiness and peace in the objects of this materialistic but perishable world which ultimately give them sorrows and anguish in return (24).

त्वमिन्द्रोऽग्निर्यमो रक्षो वरुणश्च तथानिलः। कुबेरश्च तथा रुद्रस्त्वमेव पुरुषोत्तम॥२५॥

25. Oh the most exalted and the best among males ('Purshottam', an epithet for Vishnu)! You are Indra (the king of Gods), the Fire, Yam (the patron God of death), Raksho (literally, the one who protects; also means God, 'good luck' personified), Varun (the

patron God of water), the Wind God, Kuber (the treasurer of Gods) and Rudra (one of the eleven forms of Shiva; synonymous with annihilation of the creation) (25).

त्वमणोरप्यणीयांश्च स्थूलात् स्थूलतरः प्रभो। त्वं पिता सर्वलोकानां माता धाता त्वमेव हि॥२६॥

26. Oh Lord! You are minute than an atom and larger than the greatest of creation. You are the father, the mother and the nourisher as well as the bearer of the entire creation (26).

आदिमध्यान्तरहितः परिपूर्णोऽच्युतोऽव्ययः। त्वं पाणिपादरहितश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रविवर्जितः॥२७॥

27. You are without a beginning, middle or an end. You are always uniformly complete, eternal and imperishable, and infinite and limitless. You are have no physical organs such as hands and legs or eyes and nose (because you are formless and without attributes) (27).

श्रोता द्रष्टा ग्रहीता च जवनस्त्वं खरान्तक। कोशेभ्यो व्यतिरिक्तस्त्वं निर्गुणो निरुपाश्रयः॥२८॥

28. But still, oh the slayer of the demon Khar, you are the one who hears all, sees all, accepts all and are very swift, rapid moving, diligent and agile. You are free from the encumbrances pertaining to the '5-Koshas'¹.

You are Nirgun (formless, invisible, without any defining characteristics or attributes called 'Gunas' which is so typifies this world). And you have no abode as such (i.e. you are not fixed or localised to any specific location or habitat, because the whole universe is your abode by the virtue of the fact that you are present in all the five elements that constitute the world) (28).

[Note--¹The 5 Koshas are the sheaths that surround the central Atma. These are called the Annmaya Kosh or the food sheath; the Pran Maya Kosh or the vital air sheath; the Manomya Kosh or the mind sheath; the Vigyan Maya Kosh or the intellect sheath; and the Anand Maya Kosh or the bliss sheath.]

निर्विकल्पो निर्विकारो निराकारो निरीश्वरः। षड्भावरहितोऽनादिः पुरुषः प्रकृतेः परः॥२९॥

29. You have no parallel, no match and no alternatives. You are without any faults, blemishes, shortcomings and taints. You have no form, no attributes, no names and no qualifying qualities defining you. You are inspired by none and are self driven; you have no Lord above you who can order you to do anything. You are free from the so-called six faults, shortcomings, blemishes or taints associated with this creation and its creatures¹. You are beyond Nature, called Prakriti. You are the eternal Purush who has no has no

beginning or end. [Here 'Purush' means the male aspect of nature or the Viraat Purush that existed even prior to the whole creation coming into being) (29).

[Note :- ¹The *six Faults* mentioned in verse no. 29 are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors.]

मायया गृह्यमाणस्त्वं मनुष्य इव भाव्यसे। ज्ञात्वा त्वां निर्गुणमजं वैष्णवा मोक्षगामिनः॥३०॥

30. You appear to be like an ordinary human being because of the illusion created by your Maya (the delusion creating powers of the Lord). The Vaishnavs (those who worship Lord Vishnu and treat him as the supreme Lord who manifests in the form of various incarnations to rid the world of evil and vices) attain emancipation and salvation by realizing that, in reality, you as are that supreme Lord who is called 'Nirgun', i.e. one who has no Gunas (no attributes and qualifying virtues, either good or bad) and 'Ajanma', i.e. one who has no birth (because he is eternal and imperishable) (30).

अहं त्वत्पादसद्भक्तिनिः श्रेणीं प्राप्य राघव। इच्छामि ज्ञानयोगाख्यं सौधमारोढुमीश्वर॥३१॥

31. Oh Raghav! I wish to climb up the stairs (or steps of the ladder) representing sincere, steady, everlasting and pure 'Bhakti' (i.e. firm devotion, faith, conviction and belief, having reverence and adoration, worshipping and honouring) in your lotus-like holy feet, in order to reach the pinnacle of the royal palace called 'Gyan Yog' (enlightenment and wisdom acquired through truthful knowledge of the supreme reality) (31).

नमः सीतापते राम नमः कारुणिकोत्तम। रावणारे नमस्तुभ्यं त्राहि मां भवसागरात्॥३२॥

32. Oh Sita's dear Lord Sri Ram who is the best among those who are merciful, munificent, benevolent and compassionate! I bow reverentially before you. Oh the slayer

or vanquisher of Ravana! I repeatedly bow reverentially before you. You should save me from being submerged and getting drowned in the ocean-like mundane world' (32).

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Ram Stuti (prayer) by Brahma (the creator)

This Stuti (prayer) by Brahma appears in Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uddha (Lanka) Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 10-18.

ब्रह्मोवाच

वन्दे देवं विष्णुमशेषस्थितिहेतुं त्वामध्यात्मज्ञानिभिरन्तर्हृदि भाव्यम्।
हेयाहेयद्वन्द्वविहीनं परमेकं सत्तामात्रं सर्वहृदिस्थं दृशिरूपम्॥१०॥

10. Lord Brahma, the creator said, 'Oh Lord! I pray to you who are Lord Vishnu personified; you are the cause of the very existence of all the creatures; you are enthroned in the heart of self-enlightened or self-realised persons; you are free from the confusions, uncertainties, dilemmas and consternations arising from whether to leave and abandon anything or accept it; you are beyond everything and are without a parallel and match, i.e. you are unique and one like yourself alone; you are the only supreme authority and majesty in the whole world; you reside in the heart of all (in the form of the microcosmic soul); and you are the witness to all that exists (10).

प्राणापानौ निश्चयबुद्ध्या हृदि रुद्ध्वा छित्त्वा सर्वं संशयबन्धं विषयौघान्।
पश्यन्तीशं यं गतमोहा यतयस्तं वन्दे रामं रत्नकिरीटं रविभासम्॥११॥

11. Sages and hermits who are without any worldly attachments, who exert/exercise control over their two vital wind (life) forces—'Pran and Apaana'—and restrain or check them in their hearts with a firm determination, a concentrated mind and a focused intellect, and who, at the same time, are able to cut through (puncture, destroy, smash, overcome, vanquish, conquer, spike, break or crush) all the shackles representing uncertainties, doubts, confusions and perplexities, as well as overcome the numerous tugs and pulls exerted by various types of infatuations, yearnings and desires for self gratifications and obtaining pleasures of the sense objects pertaining to this materialistic world, which are, however, nothing but harmful poisons—only such sages and hermits can have a divine view of the Lord in their hearts. I bow and pray most reverentially to such a Lord Sri Ram who is adorned by a jewel studded glittering crown with a tiara, and is as majestic, splendourous, radiant and glorious as the Sun (11).

मायातीतं माधवमाद्यं जगदादिं मानातीतं मोहविनाशं मुनिवन्द्यम् ।
योगिध्येयं योगविधानं परिपूर्णं वन्दे रामं रञ्जितलोकं रमणीयम् ।१२॥

12. He who is beyond the influence, spell and reach of Maya (delusions, ignorance, hallucinations and illusions), who is the divine consort of Laxmi (i.e. who is Lord Vishnu himself), who is the original cause of the creation of the world, who is beyond the requirement of visible proof of existence (i.e. who cannot be measured by or compared to any known worldly yardsticks, standards or benchmarks to establish his authenticity and truthfulness), who destroys all Moha (attachments, infatuations, attractions, yearnings and desires) that exist in the world, who is praised by sages, seers and hermits, who is worthy of being meditated upon by the Yogis (ascetics), who is the founder, teacher, author and judge for the path of Yoga (meditation and concentration on the Lord), and who is complete in all respects—I bow most reverentially and humbly pray to that Lord known as Sri Ram who gives happiness, bliss, joy and delight to the whole world, and is most charming, pleasing, enthralling, beguiling and beautiful in every way (12).

भावाभावप्रत्ययहीनं भवमुख्यैर्योगासक्तैरर्चितपादाम्बुजयुग्मम् ।
नित्यं शुद्धं बुद्धमनन्तं प्रणवाख्यं वन्दे रामं वीरमशेषासुरदावम् ।१३॥

13. He who has no emotions of any kind whatsoever, i.e. who is perpetually neutral and equitable, being unmoved and unwavering, constantly remaining indifferent and dispassionate under all circumstances, whether favourable or unfavourable; whose lotus-like twin holy feet are worshipped, revered and honoured by the Lord who is the chief amongst the Yogis (i.e. Lord Shiva) and others as well, who is eternal, perpetual, permanent, immutable and everlasting, who is pristine pure, absolutely uncorrupt, without any shortcomings, blemishes or faults, who is most wise, realised, knowledgeable, erudite, sagacious and enlightened, who is without an end and conclusion, and who is like a wild fire for the multitudes of demons (representing evil and vile forces in this world)—I bow most reverentially and humbly pray to such a valiant and valorous Lord known as Sri Ram who represents the divine, ethereal cosmic sound called ‘OM’! (13).

त्वं मे नाथो नाथितकार्याखिलकारी मानातीतो माधवरूपोऽखिलधारी ।
भक्त्या गम्यो भावितरूपो भवहारी योगाभ्यासैर्भावितचेतःसहचारी ।१४॥

14. You are my Lord; you are the one who completes and implements all the proposals and prayers made by me (i.e. I propose but you are the one who puts them into practice; or in other words, the success of all my endeavours are dependent upon you). You are beyond any established standards or benchmarks, any dimensions and measurements, any generalities and scales that are usually applicable to all other entities in this world. You

are a personification of Madhav (another name of Narayan, Vishnu, the sustainer of creation and the consort of goddess Laxmi). You are the bearer, sustainer and nourisher of the whole world. You are attainable or accessible only by firm faith, sincerity, devotion, dedication, belief and conviction. You can remove the fears arising out of this mundane, entrapping, deluding and artificial world by remembering your form which is divine, ethereal, sublime, subtle and eclectic but esoteric and mysterious. You reside in, literally move about and remain ensconced in, the mind-intellect complex which has been purified by the practice of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) (14).

त्वामाद्यन्तं लोकततीनां परमीशं लोकानां नो लौकिकमानैरधिगम्यम् ।
भक्तिश्रद्धाभावसमेतैर्भजनीयं वन्दे रामं सुन्दरमिन्दीवरनीलम् ।१५॥

15. You are the beginning and an end of this traditional world; you are the supreme Lord of all the worlds. You cannot be understood, measured, comprehended, proved, derived at or deduced by any standard, yardstick, measurement, scale, method or experiment known to this world. You are the Lord who is worthy to be adored, worshipped, honoured, revered and praised by those who have sincere devotion, dedication, faith, conviction, belief and reverence for you and have spiritually inclined emotions and outlooks—I bow humbly in reverence to Sri Ram who is as beautiful and enchanting as a blue-lotus (15).

को वा ज्ञातुं त्वामतिमानं गतमानं मायासक्तो माधव शक्तो मुनिमान्यम् ।
वृन्दारण्ये वन्दितवृन्दारकवृन्दं वन्दे रामं भवमुखवन्द्यं सुखकन्दम् ।१६॥

16. You are beyond the need of any visible proof or evidence to establish your existence, majesty, divinity and authority (i.e. no proof or evidence is required to establish your existence or authority). You are without any pride, ego, haughtiness, vanity and arrogance. Which creature, who is surrounded by, under the influence of and engrossed in Maya (i.e. shrouded by delusions arising out of ignorance and misconceptions about the actual reality about this materialistic world), is capable or proficient and adept enough to know who you really and truthfully are?

Oh Madhav (literally meaning the divine consort of Laxmi; another name of Vishnu)! You are the revered and venerable one for the great sages, seers and hermits. Though you had praised, honoured and adored all the Gods in Vrindavan (during your manifestation as Lord Krishna), you are yourself praised, honoured and adored by all of the Gods themselves as well as by Lord Shiva in the form of Sri Ram. I bow and pay my obeisance to Sri Ram who is a root (treasury, fount) of bliss, happiness, peace and tranquility (16).

नानाशास्त्रैर्वेदकदम्बैः प्रतिपाद्यं नित्यानन्दं निर्विषयज्ञानमनादिम् ।
मत्सेवार्थं मानुषभावं प्रतिपन्नं वन्दे रामं मरकतवर्णं मथुरेशम् ।१७॥

17. You are proved beyond doubt, confusion or uncertainties, and are the one who is being invoked, expounded upon and enunciated by the various scriptures along with by the Vedas (i.e. you are ascertained, proclaimed, demonstrated and established without any confusion by them) which unequivocally proclaim you as being eternal, immutable, truthful, unchanging and perpetual, as being an image of beatitude and felicity, as being without any alternatives and one of your only kind, as being an embodiment or an image of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment, erudition, sagacity and realisation), and as being without a beginning and an end.

You have assumed a human form just in order to accomplish my pending work (that is, to protect the creation from the tyranny of cruel demons and other evil mongers). I bow in honour and reverence to Sri Ram who is blue-complexioned like the Markat Mani (blue sapphire), and are the Lord of Mathura (the city where Lord Krishna had slayed the demon Kansa) (17).

[Note :- The reference to Lord Krishna as being the Lord of Mathura while praying to Sri Ram indicates that Brahma, the creator, sees no difference between Sri Ram and Sri Krishna, which indeed is the fact.]

श्रद्धायुक्तो यः पठतीमं स्तवमाद्यं ब्राह्मं ब्रह्मज्ञानविधानं भुवि मर्त्यः।
रामं श्यामं कामितकामप्रदमीशं ध्यात्वा ध्याता पातकजालैर्विगतः स्यात् ॥१८॥

18. Those wise and thoughtful persons in this mortal world who would read and recite this prime and eternal Stotra (prayerful hymns)—which were first conceived and enunciated by Lord Brahma, the creator, and which are imbued and infused with the essential tenets pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm—with full devotion, faith, conviction, respect and honour, are sure to be liberated/freed from all the shackles and entanglements representing the evil effects pertaining to their sins, misdeeds and misdemeanors of all kinds. Such recitation or reading should be done by invoking Sri Ram who is of a dark complexion and is the fulfiller of all the wishes and desires of his devotees. This Stotra proclaims and establishes the reality and essence about the supreme Brahm (18).

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SKAND PURAN– NAGAR KHAND

The following verses of the Skand Puran highlight the importance and spiritual value of chanting or repeating of Lord Ram's holy Name 'Ram' with dedication and devotion. This was told by Lord Shiva to his divine consort goddess Parvati.

रामेति द्वयक्षरजपः सर्वपापापनोदकः । गच्छन् तिष्ठञ्शयानो वा मनुजो रामकीर्तनात् ॥1

By chanting the Ram Mantra of two syllables 'Ra' and 'Ma' one can vanquish all sins; those who chant it constantly – standing, walking, sleeping – can be sure of salvation. (1)

इह निर्वर्तितो याति चान्ते हरिगणो भवेत् । रामेति द्वयक्षरो मन्त्रो मन्त्रकोटिशताधिकः ॥2

He goes from this world fully satisfied and fulfilled (with no desires left) and finds refuge in Sri Hari. 'Ram'– this two letter mantra is worth hundreds and thousands of other Mantras (2).

न रामादधिकं किञ्चित् पठनं जगतीतले । रामनामाश्रया ये वै न तेषां यमयातना ॥3

There is nothing greater or more worthy for chanting than Ram Mantra; those who seek refuge in it, do not have to suffer distress (3).

रामते सर्वभूतेषु स्थावरेषु चरेषु च । अन्तरात्मस्वरूपेण यच्च रामेति कथ्यते ॥4

Those who chant Sri Ram's Holy Mantra with conviction and faith, find abode in the Lord who resides in all the creatures of this mundane world (4).

रामेति मन्त्रराजोऽयं भवव्याधिनिषूदकः । रामचन्द्रेति रामेति समुदाहृतः ॥5

'Ram' (Rām; pronounced as "Rā + ma" or Raam) is the supreme Mantra; it dispels fear and distress; it should be chanted constantly as 'Ram–Ram' (5).

द्वयक्षरो मन्त्रराजोऽयं सर्वकार्यकरो भुवि । देवा अपि प्रगायन्ति रामनाम गुणाकरम् ॥6

This two letter Mantra give success in all the sphere in this world; Even the Gods praise the glory of the mine of virtues (6).

तस्मात् त्वमपि देवेशि रामनाम सदा वद । राम नाम जपेद् यो वै मुच्यते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ॥७

Hence, Oh the most exalted Goddess (Parvati) you should also chant Ram Mantra constantly. Those who chant Sri Ram's name are liberated from all sins (7).

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Appendix no. 1

Saint Goswami Tulsidas A life sketch

One of the greatest saints, poets, philosophers and blessed souls known to us is Goswami Tulsidas. This saint, born in India in the 16th century, was a great devotee of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. Tulsidas was not an ordinary poet or saint; he was an apostle of the Lord sent especially on this earth to spread the message of love, devotion and faith for the Supreme Being in the form of Sri Ram, a form that the common man could easily relate to and understand. Tulsidas propagated the divine story of Lord Ram and made the Lord's holy Name a household name through his writings, thereby making spiritual liberation and deliverance easily available to the common man, and bringing the Supreme Being nearer to him and his heart than ever before.

His message of having love, devotion, faith and submission for Lord Ram as a way to find eternal liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death, as a means of finding freedom from the formidable shackle of miseries and torments that constantly harass a creature in this deluding world in which all the living beings find themselves trapped, and to obtain emancipation and salvation for their souls which would lead to their ultimate and final peace, tranquility and blissful rest, was heartily accepted and welcomed by the masses for its simplicity of approach, and for the freedom that it provided them from elaborate rituals and formalities as ordained in the ancient scriptures which the common man found extremely difficult, impractical and cumbersome to follow.

While the original scriptures were written in the classical language of India, known as Sanskrit, that was limited to the higher and learned classes, therefore making these scriptures beyond the reach of the common man, Tulsidas wrote in the local dialect known as Avadhi, which is a branch of the main language known as Hindi that is spoken throughout the central planes of India. It was the language of the masses, and therefore the writings of Tulsidas became instantly understandable, accessible and dear to the populace.

He wrote about the divine story of Lord Ram in a poetical style that fluently employed the various Raagas (tones, metres and notes) of Indian classical music as well as folk music. This immediately was acceptable by the people as compared to the chanting of the hymns in a staccato manner, or discourses that were dry and boring for the masses. After a hard day's toil, a common man found rejuvenation and refreshment when he sang a part of Tulsidas' verses rather than hear or read some long-winding discourse telling him about some distant and unknown God.

So we come to the next important contribution of Tulsidas in the field of spiritualism and religion. Through his writings he spread the message that having love, devotion, faith and submission for Lord Ram, who is no one else but incarnate Supreme Being known as Parmeshwar, the Supreme Ishwar, and the Lord God, is the easiest and most convenient method for finding Mukti (liberation and deliverance), Shanti (peace and tranquility), Shukha (happiness and joy) and Anand (bliss).

For achieving this aim the individual needed only to inculcate the habit of constantly remembering the Lord and focusing his mind on him and his holy Name, a method which the scriptures defined as Yoga. While Yoga was complicated, cumbersome, time consuming and aimed at an abstract form of God, the philosophy of Bhakti (love, devotion, dedication for the Supreme Being) as propagated by Tulsidas centered on Lord Ram as the Divinity personified, the Lord whose divine form and mystical deeds were easily documented and readable, making them understandable and within reach of the common man. This methodology brought this same hitherto abstract God extremely near to the common man, and made the God dear to him. The method of story-telling and singing the Lord's glories through melodious verses and hymns instantly struck an emotional and lovable common cord with the individual who now felt that Mukti and spiritual Shanti was not only limited to the high and the mighty as their exclusive prerogative, but he has also the same right over them.

It is obvious that any person can easily relate to an event or a personality which is common to his own experience and knowledge of the world he is acquainted with, rather than some divine Being who is intractable, unknown, invisible and living in a world beyond the wildest of one's imagination. So the net effect was that the Supreme Being was made accessible, approachable and available to the common man by saint Tulsidas through his writings, and the philosophy of Bhakti (devotion, dedication, love, faith, submission, constant remembrance etc.) that they preached.

The books and philosophy of Tulsidas dedicated to having 'Bhakti' for Lord Ram as an infallible remedy for all spiritual and worldly ills and misfortunes have spread like wild-fire amongst the masses, making him more popular than any other single poet or author of the land. This singular fact that the acclaim and respect that Tulsidas has generated down the centuries, which no one else has managed to match, vouches for the greatness of his writings, the deep import of the message of spiritualism and love for the Supreme God that they contain, the correctness and the truthfulness of his approach and preaching, and the especial blessedness of his soul.

There was one more big benefit and reward to humanity from the books of Tulsidas. The society was presented with the noble and ideal character of a king known as 'Ram' whose exemplary life and highly correct conduct set a bench-mark for others to emulate themselves and teach others to follow. It showed man that when the Supreme Being became a human being, he himself had to undergo all the throes of pain and

sufferings as well as bouts of joys and happiness that all of them have experienced in their own lives to a lesser or greater degree. But inspite of all these ups and downs of life, Lord Ram maintained the highest level of moral and emotional standards as prescribed by the scriptures. This is therefore possible for them—all members of the society—to do.

After all, there have been hundreds and thousands of great kings, emperors, conquerors and rulers in this world, and all had faithful bards lauding their achievements in glorious and colourful terms—but all faded away on the sand of time; none of them are called ‘God’. It is only Lord Ram who is eternally remembered as the saviour and the redeemer, so obviously there must be a difference between him and the rest. So by following the path walked by Lord Ram himself as narrated by Tulsidas, the individual man can be sure that he is following the best path that can be followed in his life. In other words, the common man had a practical and handy guide to show him the correct and the righteous way during the course of his routine life and his dealings with this mundane and humdrum world—this is another great contribution of Tulsidas and his writings.

So we see how the Supreme Lord of this creation has used this great apostle and messenger of his, i.e. saint Goswami Tulsidas, to help the creatures of this creation, the subjects of the loving God’s vast realm, come closer to their dear Lord and find their ultimate redemption by the easiest path that can be made available to them in this world of fast-paced life, contradictory and confusing doctrines, lack of proper spiritual guidance, and moral degradation.

The books of Tulsidas are like pitchers full of ambrosia for finding eternal peace of the mind and the heart. Just like fish feels refreshed when submerged in water, the soul of the individual person would feel refreshed and rejuvenated by keeping its self submerged in the nectar of Lord’s love and devotion by way of singing and remembering the divine deeds and stories associated with Lord Ram who is a known and a visible incarnation of the Supreme Being as narrated and sung by the great Tulsidas.

Now, let us read about Goswami Tulsidas’ life and works.

Since great saints and sages did not wish themselves to be praised but preferred that their Lord be praised and worshipped instead, so therefore Tulsidas wrote next to nothing about himself. All accounts of his life are available from contemporary accounts and circumstantial evidences as well as analysis of his writings by modern scholars and researchers. Thus, certain controversies and distractions are bound to exist, but here we shall read the most accepted version of this saint’s life and works.

Goswami Tulsidas was born in the Hindu year Samvat 1589, corresponding to 1532 A.D. His birth place is known as Rajapur (pronounced as *Raajaapur*). This is a small hamlet in the central part of India, and it is located in the district of Banda near the city of Allahabad in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

The day of the birth was the Hindu day of Sraawan Shukla Saptami which corresponds roughly to the seventh day of the bright lunar fortnight in the fifth Hindu month known as Sraawan that falls in late July to mid August.

The time of his birth is believed to be very inauspicious—it was an asterism known as Mula that was on the ascent at that time. This period is called ‘Abhuktamula’, and it is said that a child born under this asterism brings death to its parents.

The child himself was very odd—he was born after full twelve month in the mother’s womb, and at the time of his birth he had the full complement of teeth.

This frightened the parents out of their wits. The only way was to either abandon the child or not look at his face for eight long years.

His parents were extremely poor Brahmins. His father was Atma-ram Dubey, and his mother was Hulsī. [According to some accounts, the surname of his father was 'Shukla' instead of 'Dubey'.] As destined, his mother Hulsī died on the fifth day of his birth. The father was heart-broken and overcome with superstition. He abandoned the child.

The midwife who had delivered the child was named Muniya. Her mother-in-law was named Chuniya. It was this kind lady who took care of the abandoned child and fed him. As ill fate would have it, Chuniya too died when the child was six years old. His father refused to accept him and so the child was made an orphan!

The mother was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and used to worship the sacred Tulsi plant regularly. So, the family guru or the family priest called the child 'Tulsi'. This was his first name.

There is another version which says that the family priest of the child was himself known as Tulsidas, and he gave the child the name of 'Tularam' (pronounced as *Tulaaraam*). It was abbreviated to 'Tulsi'.

Anyhow, when the child was forced to fend for himself at the age of six years as outlined above, he went from door to door begging for food, and as his signal call to announce his coming and request the household to give him alms he used to say aloud 'Ram'. So the people began to call him 'Ram-bola'—literally meaning someone who says or calls out Ram.

The Supreme Lord of the world has his own mysterious ways, and when he selects someone to fulfill his divine mandate and become his apostle, the Lord takes full charge of his life. All great souls are born like ordinary human beings—no one drops from air like rain—and it is what they do later on in life, what they give to the society, what mankind learns from them and how it benefits from their teachings, their message and their legacy is what that really matters, and it is what that makes them stand out as a colossus and a tall landmark on the landscape of humanity.

And so it happened that a saint named Narhari-das, a descendant of the great seer and sage named Ramanand, had a vision (dream) that he must pick up a helpless child who was orphaned and abandoned by the world, and instruct him about the divine story of Lord Ram. Narhari-das spotted the poor boy and took him under his wings, developing a special affinity with him because of the divine order.

Narhari-das took the boy called Ram-bola to Ayodhya and performed his sacred thread ceremony. It was on this occasion that Ram-bola was rechristened as 'Tulsi-ram'. The two—Narhari-das and Tulsiram—lived for about ten months at Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram and the capital of his kingdom during the Lord's sojourn on earth. Even during this short stay, the boy was completely enthralled by the immortal story of the Lord which he used to hear in rapt attention at a number of places where it was traditionally said and repeated in this holy town. The hidden spark of divinity and holiness as well as the fire of love for his beloved Lord Ram that lay hidden in his bosom and concealed in his heart got its first puff of rejuvenation here, and this hitherto concealed fire was later on to become a raging all-engulfing fire of total submission for his beloved Lord Ram, a fire of unquestioned and undiluted love and devotion as well as

the unstoppable longing for attaining Lord Ram that not only overtook the entire being of Tulsidas alone but it also swept across the length and breadth of the land.

Narhari-das took Tulsiram to a place called 'Sukar-kshetra' that is near Ayodhya at the confluence of the rivers Saryu and Ghagra. Here they lived for the next five years.

Another learned man named Shesha Sanaatan came visiting, and he took Tulsiram with him to Varanasi, a holy city traditionally held as the center of learning and education in the classics and languages from ancient times. It was here that Tulsiram was re-named 'Tulsidas' by his new guru Sanaatan.

At Varanasi Tulsidas learnt Sanskrit language and its grammar. He was introduced to literature devoted to the theme closest to his heart—the theme of Lord Ram. He read the versions of the Lord's story as narrated by sages Valmiki and Veda Vyas, as well as the various Purans and other ancient texts. Tulsidas literally gulped down these texts like a hungry man partaking of delicious food for the first time in his life. He was extremely bright and mastered the finer nuances of the language and the ancient texts.

Gradually his name and fame spread as an eligible bachelor who was an expert teacher and a scholar par-excellence. He used to teach and preach the Purans and the versions of the Ramayana, and earned his livelihood as well as renown. A Brahmin family of the Bharadwaj lineage lived in a village known as Taarpita which was across the river Yamuna from Tulsidas' ancestral village of Rajapur. The head of the family was a Brahmin named Deen Bandhu Paathak. He had a beautiful daughter named Ratnawali (Ratnaawali). When he heard about the great name and fame of Tulsidas he married his daughter Ratnawali to him.

Tulsidas and Rathawali had a son named 'Tarapati' (Taaraapati). But unfortunately the child died early in infancy. Besides this single tragedy, Tulsidas' married life was otherwise happily spent for fifteen years. Tulsidas loved his wife passionately and he could not think of ever living without her even for a day.

Now let us see how the remarkable change came into his life—a change that turned this scholarly household man who used to spend his days like an ordinary scholarly person giving discourses and preaching the scriptures and earning his livelihood into a legend even during his lifetime, someone who left us a legacy of Bhakti and Mukti that are easily accessible, as well as a rich heritage of devotional literature of exceptional beauty and charm like the world has never seen before.

There are two versions of the incident that was the turning point in his life, and which made this hitherto passionate man renounce the world completely along with all its attractions, and instead devote the rest of his life in total submission to his beloved Lord Ram, a life of total submersion in the ocean of love and devotion for Lord Ram who was the beloved of his soul.

The first version is as follows. It happened that once his brother-in-law came visiting the household of Tulsidas. Tulsidas had to go out on some assignment to preach the Purans for eleven days. So his wife Ratnawali took his permission and went with her brother to her parent's home, promising to come back before Tulsidas returns. But when he came back from his assignment he found that she hadn't come. So enamoured was Tulsidas with his wife that he could not wait for her arrival, and he set out forthwith to his in-law's place. It was night and the river Yamuna was in spate, but Tulsidas didn't have patience left in him. So he caught hold of a floating corpse and crossed over to the

other side. When he reached his in-law's place, he got due respect, but Ratnawali was shocked and dismayed at his behaviour; she felt embarrassed at his conduct and thought that people in her village would start passing lurid and lascivious comments when they come to hear the developments the next morning. Besides this, she wished good for her husband's spiritual welfare because she was no ordinary woman. She thought to her self that her husband had been teaching and preaching the scriptures for so long a time but had not understood any tiny bit of their meaning. So she scolded him when they were alone. The essence of what she said is this—'Look. The amount of love and passion that you have for me and my body made of bones and flesh, how wonderful would it have been if you had even half of it for Lord Ram whom you preach about, who has taken care of you when no one else bothered, and who fills your stomach even now.'

Tulsidas' eyes of wisdom opened instantly. He got up and retraced his steps immediately. Ratnawali was again shocked. She did not mean that her husband would abandon her. Her scolding was supposed to be a normal tiff between a wife and a husband, and was nothing as serious as it turned out to be.

Anyway, Tulsidas turned away from this humdrum life once and for all. Broken and devastated, Ratnawali lived thereafter like a hermitress, spending some time in her maternal village and sometime in the village of her brother-in-law named Nanda-das. It is believed that she composed 201 Dohas, two-line verses having devotional and spiritual tone. She died in Samvat 1651 (A.D. 1594).

According to the other version, when Tulsidas reached his in-law's house, all were asleep. He caught hold a serpent to climb the boundary wall, thinking the serpent to be a rope, and called out the people inside to open the gates. All woke up, but Ratnawali was extremely peeved and she scolded Tulsidas in the manner described above.

Moving out for ever, Tulsidas went on a pilgrimage to all the sacred places, and finally settled down in Varanasi. He was already well-known here as a scholar and a great devotee of the Lord. Tulsidas began spending his time preaching the texts of the Sanskrit versions of the Ramayana but thought to himself that he better write the divine story of Lord Ram in the local dialect for the benefit of the masses. Again, he decided that it was the best form of meditation and contemplation for him which will have a two-pronged benefit—one was that his days and time would be spent constructively in remaining submerged in the thoughts of his beloved Lord Ram, and second he would leave behind a legacy that would generate devotion, dedication and love for the Lord in the heart of the coming generations down the ages. He realised that the story of Lord Ram was till that time in Sanskrit, a language of the scholars and not of the common man, so there was the great need of speaking and writing in the common man's language so that the Lord's story became easily readable and understandable by him. Thus, by his writings Tulsidas brought Lord Ram and his divine name closer home and nearer to every ordinary household, every single individual on the land.

It is said that the local people of Varanasi recognised his scholarship and he was made an Abbott of a monastery, known as a Mattha. It was this appointment that bestowed the title 'Goswami' upon him because it is a title of honour. The word also means someone who has learnt to exercise control over the sense organs. This Mattha came to be known as the 'Tulsidas Mattha', but by Samvat 1848 (A.D. 1791) it was renamed as 'Sthaan Tulsidas'.

Tulsidas wrote for approximately 50-60 years of his life. Amongst his contemporary poets and saints with whom he came in contact are the following—Surdas, Nanda-das, Mirabai and Keshav-das. It is also known that a Muslim chieftain named Abdur-rahim Khaan-khaana, who was a governor and administrator of Varanasi, and a rich Hindu landlord named Todarmal were greatly influenced by Tulsidas and had great respect for him.

There is a popular legend associated with Tulsidas. We shall cite some of the well known ones here.

There was a criminal who would call out ‘in the name of Ram, give alms to this murderer’. Tulsidas was so delighted and overwhelmed when he would hear the name of this beloved Ram being called out that he would take this criminal to his austere place and share whatever food he had with him. This of course led to great scorn and anger amongst the orthodox Brahmins who demanded an explanation from Tulsidas. He told them that once this man has said ‘Ram’ all his sins were wiped away. Infuriated further, the Brahmins said that if he had this much faith in the Lord and if what he said is the truth then he must prove it. The test was that if the stone bull placed in a Shiva temple would eat from the hands of the criminal it would be proved that what Tulsidas said was correct, otherwise they would castrate him from the society. On the designated day, to the wonder of all assembled to watch the spectacle, the stone bull actually ate from the hands of the criminal!

This made his tormentors more jealous of him. They hired a professional thief and told him to enter his house in the night and steal his manuscripts. When the thief came in he found Tulsidas sleeping blissfully but two young boys, with bow and arrow in hand, were guarding his house. They were Lord Ram and Laxman themselves. The thief beat a hasty retreat out of fear for his life, and then become Tulsidas’ great admirer.

The continued harassment of Tulsidas made him appeal to Lord Hanuman, the most beloved devotee of Lord Ram and himself a manifestation of Lord Shiva, to help him. Hanuman asked Tulsidas in a dream to write a prayerful petition to Lord Ram seeking the Lord’s intervention. It is believed that these prayers turned out to be the text of the book ‘Vinai Patrika’ that Tulsidas wrote.

There is another fascinating legend related to his life. It says that everyday after his morning ablutions Tulsidas would pour some water at the base of the holy banyan tree. A spirit that lived on that tree and suffered due to some mistakes of the past evil deeds was able to quench its thirst and heard the divine name of Ram which Tulsidas would utter while pouring water. The spirit was absolved of its sins and found liberation. So it blessed Tulsidas and told him that he can have a wish fulfilled. Tulsidas wanted a Darshan (holy sight) of his beloved Ram, and so he asked for this boon. The spirit told him that an old beggar-like man attends his discourses everyday; he comes first, sits at the back of the congregation, and is the last to leave. He would help Tulsidas to meet Ram. Next day, Tulsidas found him out and caught hold of his legs—beseeching him to make him see Ram. This old man was no one else but Lord Hanuman in disguise.

He advised Tulsidas that he should go to Chitrakoot, a place amongst the mountains where Lord Ram had spent the earlier part of his forest exile, and there he will have a Darshan of the Lord. Tulsidas went to Chitrakoot and made it his habit to first take a bath in the river there and then prepare a paste of sandalwood that he would apply to his own forehead and to those devotees who came to take a bath in the river, saying the name

of Ram each time. Shortly after his coming, one day Lord Ram appeared before him and asked him to give some sandalwood paste and apply it on the Lord's forehead. Not only this, the Lord applied the paste to Tulsidas' forehead with his own hands. What more would Tulsidas want! He got the fruit of his life. He became ecstatic and immediately went into a trance-like state of extreme bliss known as Samadhi that is said to have lasted for the next three days.

There is a verse commemorating this event. It is as follows—

चित्रकूट के घाट पर भई संतन की भीड़ ।

तुलसीदास चंदन घिसें तिलक देत रघुवीर ॥

It means 'On the banks of a river in Chitrakoot, there is a crowd of saints and holy people. Tulsidas is rubbing sandalwood to make a paste, and Raghubir (Lord Ram) uses this paste to make the mark of the Tilak on their foreheads.' [The Tilak is a sign consisting of three parallel horizontal lines that are made on the forehead of devotees of Lord Vishnu using paste of sandalwood.]

Once he had gone to Vrindavan to visit the holy sites associated with Lord Krishna. In the main temple there he addressed the presiding deity and sang that he would bow his head only if the Lord holds a bow and arrow (like Lord Ram). It is said that immediately, to the amazement of all present, the idol of Lord Krishna was seen holding a bow and arrow. Tulsidas fell down like a rod to pay his obeisance to his beloved Lord Ram who had revealed there and then on the altar. There is a subtle message in this incident—that all forms of the Lord are the same, whether it is the form known as Lord Krishna or the form known as Lord Ram. What one needs to see his beloved Lord everywhere in this creation is love, devotion, dedication, conviction, faith and sincerity that are deep and truthful—if these qualities are there, the Lord is also there.

There is one more episode of historical authenticity that is worth recounting here. It is believed that the Mughal Emperor Jahangir had heard of the mystical powers of Tulsidas. When he met Tulsidas once, he asked him to show some miracle. Tulsidas refused, saying that he knew no black magic, and the only thing he knew was the name of 'Ram'. This obviously angered the emperor, who was not accustomed to such blunt replies, so he ordered that Tulsidas be imprisoned. 'Let me see how your Ram saves you now,' rebuked Jahangir. It is believed that a fierce bunch of monkeys attacked the fort and the prison, wreaking havoc all around. Jahangir realised that Tulsidas was not an ordinary man, and he relented. He not only released Tulsidas from prison but gave him gifts in the form of gold and silver coins. It is a belief that Tulsidas used that money to build Hanuman's temple at Varanasi with moulded the Lord's image his own hands.

Tulsidas left his mortal coil (body) in Varanasi on the banks of the holy river Ganges at the Assi Ghat. The day was Sraavan Shukla Saptami of Samvat 1680 (A.D. 1623). According to another account, the day was Sraavan Badi Teej, and this day is regarded as more authentic because it is followed as the death anniversary of Tulsidas by the descendants of Todarmal who regard Tulsidas as their Guru. [Shukla Saptami is the seventh day of the bright half of the lunar month, while Badi Teej is the third day of the dark half. Sraawan is the fifth Hindu month falling roughly between end of July and mid of August.]

Tulsidas was exceptional and unique because he was an enlightened soul especially empowered by the Holy Spirit of the Lord himself to spread the message of love and devotion for the Lord as a means of attaining spiritual purity, peace and bliss alongside the opportunity of attaining emancipation and salvation for the individual's soul, known as the Atma. Tulsidas adopted the simplified method of remembering the Lord through the medium of the Lord's deeds in this world. This helped Tulsidas to ever remain submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and to keep his mind focused on the Divinity and away from this deluding world and its entangling spiritual mess. This is what the essence of Yoga is—to remain focused on the 'Truth' and exclude all that is the 'untruth'.

This was a form of meditation and contemplation for Tulsidas; it helped him to divert his mind from the affairs of the mundane world around him and focus it instead on the Divine Being who lived in this external world as Lord Ram and as the Atma, the pure conscious soul, in his inner self. This is also the focus of Yoga, the established and scripturally sanctified way of establishing a union between the individual's soul known as the Atma, and the Supreme Soul of this creation known as the Parmatma. A profound resonance is created when the vibrations of the individual soul begin to correspond with the cosmic vibrations generated by the Supreme Soul, and this leads to what the scriptures recognise as the state of bliss and Samadhi, the state of perpetual ecstasy and bliss.

The reason for his continuously writing so many versions of the same story of Lord Ram in so many different ways—e.g. Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali, Geetawali, Barvai Ramayan, Vinai Patrika, Dohawali—is that he used this method as a means of meditation on the Supreme Being in his visible form as Lord Ram, and repeating the Lord's holy name as much as possible by continuously writing on this theme as a means of contemplation and fixing his mind on the Divinity instead of anything related to the physical world of material objects. This was a profound form of Yoga for him as it helped him to establish a communion of his soul with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

This is what Tulsidas subtly taught us—to become eternally blissful by remaining engrossed in the thoughts of the Divinity that is bliss personified, and enjoy the happiness that comes with the realisation that the Supreme Lord, our protector and redeemer, is not only always with us but also exceptionally easy to access without any hassle and formality. And the tool for this achievement is to keep the Lord eternally in our mind and heart by keeping them submerged in his thoughts. This is easily done by reading, hearing, telling and discussing about the Lord's divine story in all its myriad variations and colourful versions.

In order to achieve this end, Tulsidas wrote prolifically on the theme of Lord Ram as an incarnation of Divinity, as the Supreme Being living himself in our midst in the form of Lord Ram's holy story!

One great benefit of this approach was that his entire life and time was spent in the form of one huge Yoga, done continuously and unbroken. He did not remain satisfied by writing one book, say the Ram Charit Manas, but wrote three other books to narrate the same story—these are the Kavitawali and the Geetawali. These two books supplemented and complimented the epic story which was narrated in the Ram Charit Manas. There were certain events in the epic life of Lord Ram that the great soul Tulsidas wished to add more colour and vibrancy to, so he decided to mould them in the form of

music and song. A song that is sung melodiously is more heart warming and heart touching than mere narration of events no matter how beautifully they have been narrated. So he wrote the Kavitawali and the Geetawali—both these narrate the same story of Lord Ram's life and deeds but in a pattern that is set to different 'Raagas' which are musical notes, metres and tones of classical Indian music. It is practically observed in our day to day life that one can easily recall some song, sing it comfortably and hum its musical tune more easily as compared to reciting some regular text of a classical book.

The books of Tulsidas—As has been noted above, Tulsidas spent his life preaching, teaching and writing about his beloved Lord Ram. The following books are universally regarded as being written by him. The list is according to the year and period of his life when he wrote them.

1. Vairaagya Sandipani—it was written roughly between Samvat 1626 and 1627 (A.D. 1569-70).
2. Ram-agya-prashna—it was written roughly between Samvat 1627 and 1628 (A.D. 1570-71).
3. Ram-lalaa Nahachhu—it was written roughly between Samvat 1628 and 1629 (A.D. 1571-72).
4. Janki Mangal—it was written roughly between Samvat 1629 and 1630 (A.D. 1572-73).
5. Ram Charit Manas—the writing of this great epic was started in Samvat 1631 (A.D. 1574)---but the date of conclusion is not determined.
6. Parvati Mangal—again, it was started in Samvat 1643 (A.D. 1586)---the date of conclusion is not determined.
7. Geetawali (Ram Geetawali)—it was written roughly between Samvat 1630 and 1670 (A.D. 1573-1613).
8. Vinai Patrika—it was written roughly between Samvat 1631 and 1679 (A.D. 1574-1622).
9. Dohawali—it was written roughly between Samvat 1626 and 1680 (A.D. 1569-1623).
10. Varvai Ramayan—it was written roughly between Samvat 1630 and 1680 (A.D. 1573-1623).
11. Kavitawali—it was written roughly between Samvat 1631 and 1680 (A.D. 1574-1623).
12. Hanuman Baahuk—it was written roughly between Samvat 1631 and 1680 (A.D. 1574-1623).
13. Krishna Geetawali—it was written roughly between Samvat 1643 and 1660 (A.D. 1586-1603).

Now, let us very briefly glance at what these thirteen books are about. Tulsidas' magnum opus is unquestionably the Ram Charit Manas. It is the most revered and sacred text, known universally as the Ramayana, which is the narrative of the divine story of the life and times of Lord Ram who was the incarnate Supreme Being on earth. It is universally regarded as the bench-mark for the narrative of the holy story of Lord Ram.

The Geetawali and Kavitawali are variations of the Ramayana as they also describe the divine story of Lord Ram but use the different Raagas (notes, metres and tones) of classical music of India to narrate the different events in Lord Ram's life.

The Barvai Ramayan is also another such book which narrates the story of Lord Ram, but it is shorter than the above two books. It uses two-line verses called Barvai Chand instead of the Raagas.

The Dohawali is a compilation of two-line couplets dealing with a host of topics covering ethics, morality, proper ways of conduct and behaviour, matters concerning society and politics, daily problems of life and how to cope with them, and of course the theme of having reliance on the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram for being assured of all-round wellbeing and welfare.

The Vairagya Sandipani is a short work like the Barvai Ramayan, and it highlights the characters and virtuousness of those who have renounced all attractions of the material world and have completely surrendered themselves to Lord Ram, thereby developing the virtues that make a man a true saint and holy.

The Janki Mangal and Parvati Mangal are two books that describe the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita and Lord Shiva with Parvati in a poetic style laced with devotion and affection for the respective Lord. The verses of these two books were traditionally recited during marriage ceremonies in Indian homes as auspicious charms that brought happiness and wellbeing to the newly wed couples.

In this genre falls the other short book called Ram Lalaa Nachu. It pertains to a ceremony that is part of the overall marriage rituals in Indian homes. During this, the head and the beard of the groom are shaved and his nails cut before the actual marriage begins. It is usually done just before the marriage party starts for the venue of the marriage rituals. The book describes this ceremony for Lord Ram prior to his marriage with Sita. It is meant to complement Janki Mangal.

The Hanuman Baahuk was written by Tulsidas towards the end of his life when he suffered from severe attack of pain in his arms ('Baahu'). He prays to Lord Hanuman to relieve him of this agony. It is believed that Tulsidas was cured of this disease after he prayed to Hanuman using the hymns of this book.

And finally we have the Krishna Geetawali. It so happened that another great saint named Surdas, who was his contemporary, had a friendly exchange with Tulsidas, saying that he did not know that Ram and Krishna were the same Divinity in two forms. Surdas was perhaps referring to incident when Tulsidas didn't bow before the image of Lord Krishna when he visited Vrindavan till the Lord held a bow and an arrow.

To prove that it was not so, that he only loved the image of the Lord with the bow and arrow though he knew that there is no difference between Ram and Krishna, Tulsidas wrote Krishna Geetawali that describes the holy story of Lord Krishna. Not to be outdone, Surdas did the same in the reverse order—that is, though he was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna, he wrote a book titled 'Ram Charitawali' that describes the story of Lord Ram just like Tulsidas' Krishna Charitawali that describes the story of Lord Krishna.

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Appendix 2

Glossary of Names and their related stories

There are several names that appear repeatedly in the text. A briefing on these various names and interesting information related to them are given in this appendix so that the reader can have a handy reference material to make the reading of the text more useful. A serial number is prefixed to each of the names listed in this appendix, and the indexed items are explained thereafter one by one.

A—(1) Ajaamil.

(2) Ahilya.

D— Demons—(3) Ravana, Kumbhakaran, Meghnad.

(4) Demon Marich.

(5) Demon Kabandh.

(6) Dadhichi.

G— (7) Giddha, the Vulture Jatau.

(8) Gaja, the Elephant.

(9) Ganika, the Harlot.

(10) Garud.

(11) Gandharva.

H— (12) Hanuman.

I—(13) Incarnations of Lord Vishnu—e.g. Matsya, Kashap, Varaaha, Nrisingh, Vaaman, Krishna.

(14) Indra.

K— (15) King Dasrath.

(16) Kaushalya.

(17) Kaikeyi.

(18) King Janak.

(19) Kinnar.

L— (20) Lord Ram and his three brothers—Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.

P— (21) Prahalaad.

S— (22) Sita.

(23) Sumitra.

(24) Sumantra.

(25) Sage Agastya.

(26) Sages Sankaadi.

(27) Sage Vashistha.

(28) Sage Bharadwaj.

- (29) Sage Valmiki.
- (30) Sage Veda Vyas.
- (31) Sage Kaagbhusund.
- (32) Sage Narad.
- (33) Sage Vishwamitra.
- (34) Sage Atri.
- (35) Sabari.
- (36) Sugriv.
- (37) Sesh-nath.

T— (38) The Trinity Gods = Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder.

V—(39) Vaali/Baali was the brother of Sugriv and the king of Kishkindha, the kingdom of monkeys.

(40) Vibhishan.

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(1) Ajaamil—

Ajaamil was a Brahmin by birth, but he became enamoured with a prostitute and married her. Bad company made him turn into a hunter. One day a group of sages passed by the village. When they asked the villagers if there was a Brahmin's house where they could spend the night, the villagers told them of Ajaamil. So these sages decided to spend the night there. When Ajaamil returned from his hunting trip with a catch of a bird and saw the sages, he felt very ashamed. He confided with them that he is a fallen man and that they should not eat in his house. The saints had a merciful heart and they thought amongst themselves that it is their moral obligation to show this man some way by which he can find liberation and deliverance.

They cooked their own meals with whatever they had. The next day, they summoned Ajaamil and told him, 'Look, your wife is pregnant. She will soon deliver a son. Give that son the name 'Narayan' (one of the many names of Lord Vishnu). This would lead to your emancipation.' And then the group of sages went on their journey.

When the son was born, Ajaamil named him as advised by them—he called the son 'Narayan'. He was very fond of the son, and called out his name 'Narayan, Narayan' umpteen numbers of times during the course of the day. He was unwittingly taking the name of Lord Vishnu. This continued till the time came for his death. When he was tormented by the messengers of Yam, the God of hell and death, he became terrified and called out in fear—'Narayan, Narayan. Save me'. Though he was calling his son, but the Lord heard his name being called out by someone in distress. So he sent his own messengers to protect the caller. The messengers of Lord Vishnu chased away the messengers of Yam and took Ajaamil to heaven. When Yam complained to Vishnu, the Lord told him that if anyone calls out his name at the time of death he is duty-bound to liberate and protect him. This story tells us the power of the name of the Lord.

(2) Ahilya—She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.

(3) Demons—Ravana, Kumbhakaran, Meghnad—

They were the chief demon rulers who were killed by Lord Ram in the epic war of Lanka. Ravana was the king of the demon race, Kumbhakaran was his brother, and Meghnad was his son. Ravana's other son was Akshaya Kumar who was killed by Hanuman when he was sent by his father Ravana to capture Hanuman from the Ashok grove prior to the burning of Lanka by Hanuman.

Ravana and Kumbhakaran were killed by Lord Ram himself, while Meghnad was killed by Laxman, the younger brother of the Lord who had accompanied him to the forest. The demon king of Lanka was known as Ravana. He had ten heads and twenty arms. In his earlier life, Ravana was one of the chief guards at the gate of Lord Vishnu, and his name was 'Jai'. Jai became a demon for three births due to a curse by sages Sankaadi etc. Ravana was his second birth.

The life and times of Ravana and his brother Kumbhakaran have been described in (i) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uttarkand, Cantos 1 and 2; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 9-34; (iii) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 1-139; and (iv) Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos 176-183.

The life of Meghnad, the son of Ravana, is described in Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 12; Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13.

The Atharva Veda's *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 18 describes the meaning of the word 'Ravana' as follows—

“Since the demon had abducted Ram’s consort (Sita) from a ‘Van’ (pronounced as *won* or *one*; meaning a dense forest), he was called ‘Ravana’¹. [The first letter of the word *Ram* and the word *Van* are combined to form the name of the demon as ‘Ra+van = Ravana’.]

There is another interpretation. ‘Ravana’ also means—‘the one who makes others weep, cry, lament and wail due to the severe pain, misery, torments, terror and sorrows inflicted upon them’ (for Ravana’s actions had made Sita suffer, weep and wail).

Further, he made a lot of noise or false claims, or he used to brag haughtily about his achievements, his strength and powers as well as of his invincibility and lordship over even the heavens. Wherever he went, he behaved most wildly and acted like a savage, making a lot of din and clamour to spread fear and terror.

So, the first part of his name *Ravana* comes from the word *Rav* for ‘fuss, noise, chatter, clamour, nuisance and din’². Thus, he became famous as ‘Ravana’ because he made a lot of noise and false claims.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Laxman began their search for Sita (18).

[Note—¹There is an interesting connotation of the word ‘Ravana’. Since his name includes the Beej Mantra for Lord Ram which incidentally is also the Beej Mantra for the eternal fire element, i.e. the letter ‘Ra’, it implies that Ravana was not an ordinary soul but a highly learned and scholarly one. Then, the word ‘Van’, meaning a forest, implies that he was a ‘treasury’ of scriptural knowledge and learning. The fact that he became a ‘demon’ instead of a living being behooving of his high standard of scriptural scholarship, knowledge, learning and erudition as well as his birth in the Brahmin race shows how merely literal knowledge and expertise in the scriptures would not necessarily mean that a person is exalted, worthy of honour and reverence, and spiritually liberated if he has not actually understood the hidden meaning of the doctrines and philosophy of the scriptures, and if he has not actually implemented them in practice in his life and deeds.

Ravana had become extremely haughty and arrogant because of his knowledge and acquisition of mystical powers that come naturally to them who do severe Tapa (penances, austerities, religious exercises), and Ravana had scored high on this count. He had done exemplary Tapa so much so that it had pleased Brahma the creator as well as Shiva the concluder. There are numerous instances in the story of the Ramayana when he has told those who had tried to persuade him to abandon his stubbornness and make peace with Lord Ram that he knows fully well that Ram is not an ordinary prince but the Supreme Being himself, and that Sita is not an ordinary woman but Shakti herself. He had stressed to them that he has purposely created this situation of animosity with the Lord by stealing Sita with full knowledge that this would lead to his getting slayed at the hands of the Lord, and that this was the only once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that he has got for his spiritual liberation from the prison of the evil body of a demon that he had acquired for himself due to his own follies and misdeeds. He would not let go of this golden chance by any means. When we take this point of view of Ravana into account, the whole story of Ramayana assumes a divine hue as the story of a highly learned and realised soul who has committed some mistakes in the past due to arrogance and lack of wisdom as to what his deeds would amount to, but realises and acknowledges later on that he is a sinful man. All the deplorable actions of Ravana around which the story of the epic Ramayana is woven are actually the attempt of a soul to find redemption for its past sins, and find emancipation and salvation once and for all.

Besides this point of his scriptural knowledge, it is also well established that he was the greatest devotee of Lord Shiva at that time. Shiva is the Lord who is honoured by the title of being a ‘Maha-Deva’—the great Lord God. Shiva is also the patron God of

ascetics and hermits, and he is the wisest and most enlightened God in the pantheon of Gods. So, the point is—how can one expect an ardent and faithful devotee of such a great God as actually being as sinful and unholy internally as Ravana’s external behaviour and life has made him appear to be?

²In this regard there is a legend that when Ravana lifted Mount Kailash, where Lord Shiva has his abode, in order to transplant it in his own kingdom of Lanka, Lord Shiva had exerted immense pressure on this mountain so as to make it exceedingly heavy and difficult to be shifted and moved over to Lanka by Ravana. At that time, Ravana had made a lot of fuss and created a lot of nuisance. Hence he came to be known as ‘Ravana’.]”

The ‘ten’ heads of Ravana has a symbolic meaning. Usually the demons had only one head like all living beings. They were called ‘demons’ because of their evil and sinful deeds, corrupt and pervert mind and intellect, cruelty of behaviour, reckless and ruthlessness tendencies, and despicable general demeanours. The demons had a preponderance of the Tama Guna, and a negative nature marked by horribly violent and intolerably volatile temperament. They had contempt for ethics and morality; they paid no heed to the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and auspiciousness).

The numeral ‘ten’ simply means that their king Ravana was ten times more sinful and ten times more powerful than the rest of them. It also means that negativity and evil nature of Ravana was ten times more than other demons of his race. So the Lord decided to get rid of this great menace for creation first, and then treat the ten-headed Ravana’s killing as a warning to the rest of the demon race to mend their selves or face the same punishment. The Lord wished to give the rest of the demons a chance to mend their ways out of fear for their lives, if for nothing else. In fact, this is what exactly happened. Not all the demons were killed and eliminated from the surface of earth during the epic war at Lanka—and the surviving ones were ruled by Vibhishan who was the younger brother of Ravana and who had taken sides with Lord Ram in the epic war at Lanka in which his elder brother Ravana was killed.

This proves one more very important and pertinent point—merely possessing a gross body like that of a demon does not mean that a Jiva is condemned if his Atma, his inner being is not demonic or sinful, and instead is holy and pious like other wise and realised souls in this creation. Further, merely Gyan or knowledge of the scriptures does not ensure that the creature would be provided with Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance—this is proved by the fact that though Ravana was an expert in the knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures, and though he was a Brahmin by birth, he still was the most evil Jiva alive at that time. Therefore, it is how a Jiva (living being, a creature) puts his body and knowledge to practical use that is of paramount importance rather than merely possessing a certain type of gross body or being able to have an access to knowledge and scriptures.

Hence, while the Lord felt it necessary to eliminate the demon king Ravana, the same Lord made his brother Vibhishan as the king of the remaining demon race.

There is another interpretation of depicting Ravana with ten heads. He was not an ordinary demon or villain, for Ravana was an expert in the four Vedas (Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva), the four Up-Vedas or sub-Vedas (Dhanur Veda pertaining to the science of warfare, Aurveda pertaining to herbal medicines, Arthashastra pertaining to economics and public administration, and Gandharva-veda related to music, song and dance-drama),

the Purans (mythological histories) and the Dharmashastras (other scriptures relating to the philosophy of Dharma or the laws of probity, propriety and righteousness). But inspite of having thoroughly studied all the Vedas and scriptures, inspite of being an expert in their tenets, and inspite of having this huge body of knowledge at his disposal, Ravana still became extremely pervert and sinful because of his vanity, passions, lust for power, ego, haughtiness and arrogance. He did not understand the spiritual message and meaning of the scriptures, and he did not utilise this knowledge for his spiritual welfare, most probably because he limited himself to their literal knowledge only, a knowledge that gave him immense temporal powers and fame but proved to be his unmaking.

This has the message for all spiritual aspirants and seekers of Mukti that mere knowledge of the scriptures is not sufficient for one's salvation; one must implement them in practice. By killing Ravana the Lord has sent a strong message to such people who are proud of their overpowering control over the literal versions of the scriptures that salvation is not theirs if they are not careful in how they utilise this knowledge and skill intelligently with proper wisdom. The Lord would not excuse them even if they are Brahmins (Ravana was a Brahmin by birth) and learned (Ravana was matchless in his knowledge of the scriptures) if they become sinful and fall from their path.

Why is he known as 'Ravana'? According to one story, once Ravana got on his chariot and flew above Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Shiva. Nandi, the mount of Shiva, told him to stop, but the arrogant Ravana did not pay any heed. So Nandi blocked his path in the sky. Peeved and feeling insulted, Ravana scooped up the entire mountain and put it on his shoulder to throw it somewhere. Lord Shiva used his might and pressed the mountain with his big toe. This crushed Ravana under the weight and the pressure, and he began to yell. He remained for a thousand years crushed under the weight of the mountain and continued to pray to Lord Shiva to free him. At that time Shiva cursed him—'you have been wailing for so long under the weight of the mountain and you are in the habit of making others wail by your cruelty, so your name will be Ravana, or 'the one who wails himself and make others wail too'.' This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13, verse nos. 84-85.

His ten heads—Ravana had pleased Lord Shiva by offering his own head. As soon as he offered one head, another came up on his shoulder. He continued to offer them ten times, and each time a new head was created.

Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Baali, had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. Mandodari refers to that incident when Ravana had tried his best to escape from Baali but could not do so, and remained clamped and squeezed under his armpit for a long time. This story is narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34.

Meghanad/Meghanaad—He was the son of Ravana. He is known as 'Meghanaad' because he roared and thundered like the cloud. The word 'Meghanaad' has two parts—viz. 'Megha' meaning a cloud, and 'Naad' meaning a loud reverberating sound.

He is also called 'Indrajeet' or the one who had conquered Indra, the king of Gods. This relates to the event when he had defeated Indra in a battle to free his father

Ravana from his captivity. This story is narrated in *Anand Ramayan* (of Valmiki), Saar Kand (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 78-82.

(4) Demon Marich—He had gone to defile the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra when Lord Ram had hit him with an arrow that did not have its tip. The demon was thus spared from being killed, but flung far off to a place in the middle of the ocean. It was this demon who was forced by Ravana to become a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted by deceit.

(5) Demon Kabandh—He was a demon without a head. He had only an abdomen from which protruded arms and legs, and it had holes that acted like the demon's mouth, nose and eyes. In his previous life he was a Gandharva who had become a demon due to a curse. His death at the hands of Lord Ram is described in the Ramayan in the Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 of Doha no. 33 till Chaupai line nos. 1-4 of the next Doha no. 34.

(6) Dadhichi—Dadhichi was an ancient sage who willingly sacrificed his life to help the Gods win over the Demons. He was the son of sage Atharvan, the progenitor of the Atharva Veda and the first sage who initiated the tradition of Fire worship, and his wife Shanti. The well known sage Pippalaad was his son. Dadhichi is a synonym for the highest ideals of self-sacrifice for the general good.

It so happened that once the Gods deposited all their weapons with him for safe keeping, promising to return at some fixed time. When they failed to show up and upon observing that the weapons had begun to rust, Dadhichi dissolved them in water and drank the solution. The ingredients of the weapons got deposited in his bones, especially the back bone. Thus, his bones became extremely strong. When the Gods came asking for their weapons, the sage told them what he had done, whereupon the Gods requested him to give them his backbone from which an invincible weapon can be crafted by which their formidable enemy, the demon king Vritraasur, could be slayed. Dadhichi conceded and gave them his backbone from which was made Indra's invincible weapon called the Vajra (thunder-bolt).

He did not die, but used the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice to remain alive in his hermitage. This fact is established in the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 6, verse no. 4.

(7) Gidha, the Vulture Jatayu—He was a vulture by birth but a great devotee of Lord Ram. When Ravana was rushing towards Lanka on his chariot with Sita as captive, it was Jatayu who had fought fiercely with him in an attempt to rescue Sita from the demon's clutches. But ultimately Ravana had cut off his wings, and so the unfortunate Jatayu fell down on the ground mortally wounded. He kept repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram and managed to hold on to his life till the time the Lord came there in his search of Sita. Jatayu told the Lord about Ravana stealing Sita and proceeding towards Lanka in the south

direction. Then Jatau left his mortal coil while Lord Ram held him in his arms, caressing him and wiping his wounds with his own hands. When he died, the Lord did his last rites himself—a privilege that no one else except one other character, i.e. Sabari, had got in the whole story of the Ramayana. Even Dasrath, who was the worldly father of the Lord, was denied this honour when he died at Ayodhya after the Lord was sent to exile in the forest. This episode is narrated in all the versions of the Ramayana, e.g. in the Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, in its Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-22 of Doha no. 29, and Chaupai line no. 18 of Doha no. 30 to Chaupai line no. 4 of Doha no. 33.

(8) Gaja, the Elephant— In the ancient country of Dravid (the present day South India), there was a kingdom called Pandyaraaj whose king was named Indradumna. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and used to offer regular worship to the Lord with great diligence. Once, sage Agastya passed that way with his retinue of disciples. The king was so engrossed in the worship of the Lord that he did not notice the sage and neither did he get up to welcome him or pay his obeisance to him. This annoyed the sage and he cursed—‘You are like a haughty and wild elephant who pays no heed to those standing in the front. Therefore, you deserve to become an elephant—so you would take a birth as an elephant.’ When the king died he became an elephant in a pleasant island in the middle of the Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean of milk.

He had a majestic body and was very strong in his herd. Once he was playing with his she-elephants and companions in a large and beautiful pond. In this pond lived an alligator/crocodile who was actually a Gandharva (a semi-god) named Huhu in his previous life and had become an alligator due to a curse of sage Deval. The alligator/crocodile caught hold of the leg of the elephant and started pulling him inside the deep lake. The Gaja himself and all his companions tried their best but failed to free him from the mouth of the alligator. A long tussle followed and the elephant became completely exhausted. When the situation became so bad that the Gaja, the elephant, was about to sink fully inside the water, he broke a lotus flower and offered it to Lord Vishnu as his last worship and offering before dying. The merciful Lord rushed instantly astride his mount, called the Garud, to save him. Reaching the spot within a moment, the Lord pulled the Gaja out of the water with one hand, and with the other he opened the mouth of the alligator to yank the leg of the elephant free from its clutches. Then the Lord cut off the alligator’s head with his circular weapon known as the Chakra.

Both the alligator/crocodile and the elephant found liberation—the alligator/crocodile reverted to his earlier form of a Gandharva, and Gaja the elephant assumed a divine form similar to that of the Lord and went to his abode in the heaven.

(9) Ganika, the Harlot—There was a prostitute by the name of Pingla. One day she had decorated herself with flowers and ornaments and waited eagerly for her lover. When he did not turn up even till midnight, she was very contrite and it dawned upon her that if she had spent so much of her time in devotion and remembrance of the Lord, she would have found deliverance. Right onwards, she turned away from her profession and became an ardent devotee of the Lord. This led to her emancipation and salvation.

(10) Garud—Garud is the mount of Lord Narayan or Vishnu. He is in the form of the legendary bird in the form of an eagle or heron. Garud stands for many things—such as speed and agility of the mind to move from one subject to another. Garud also symbolizes the spoken word. This is because spoken words are transmitted from one point to another by the medium of the sky just like the bird flying from one tree to another. Words and ideas are transmitted from one person to the other like the bird flying off from one tree and perching on another. That is why speech is likened to a bird. Garud is regarded as a personification of the knowledge contained in the Vedas because this knowledge is transmitted through the means of speech. Besides this point, there is another way of looking at this aspect. The knowledge contained in the Vedas help a wise man to reach his spiritual destination much like Lord Vishnu employing the services of Garud if he wants to go any place. The eagle is known to have a long range of vision and flies high up in the sky. The Garud is able to have a broad perspective of the sight seen below because from its high perch in the sky. This indicates the virtues of Vishnu in having wider knowledge and broad vision of life as well as to remain aloof from the humdrum affairs of the deluding world below. The Garud is extremely fast and reaches its destination in a fraction of a second—indicating the almost instantaneous reach of the Lord in all the directions of the creation. Since the Gurud is able to fly it also stands for the imaginative abilities of the mind, and since it has a penetrating vision that sees long distances he stands for the sharp and wise intellect that has foresight and deep insight.

According to *Krishna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 24, Garud took up the form of the Indian Fig tree (known as Bhandir) during Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna.

There is an Upanishad of the Atharva Veda that is dedicated to Lord Garud. It is called the *Garud Upanishad* and it is 31st Upanishad of this Veda. It has the Mantras of Garud which are said to possess great powers to overcome the killer effects of any kind of poison, especially those of snake bite.

(11) Gandharva— The *Gandharvas* are mentioned in Yajur Veda, 18/38. The word refers to their special characteristic of being very merry and joyous, and fond of sweet fragrances (Jaimini Brahman, 3/5/6/4; 3/2/4/3). They are very lustful, lascivious, passionate and promiscuous; they love being in the company of females, such as celestial damsels called Apsaras (Shatpath Brahman, 9/4/1/4). They have been assigned the duty of protection of Som, the divine drink of the Gods and the liquid that is sanctified and offered to the sacred fire during fire sacrifices (Shatpath Brahman, 3/6/2/9).

Amongst the Vedas, they find their name appearing in Yajur Veda 18/38 and Atharva Veda 2/2.

The Vedas classify them under two categories—viz. the Du-sthaaniya Gandharvas, and the Antariksha-sthaaniya Gandharvas. The Du-sthaaniya Gandharvas live in the vicinity of the earth and are responsible for giving protection of the Som Rasa (the sanctified liquid used during fire sacrifices as offering to Gods), as patron gods who cure diseases, as the charioteer of the horses of the Sun God, and as the heralds for light and knowledge. The second type, i.e. the Antariksha Gandharvas protect the Som stored by the Gods in heaven and as the controller of Stars.

The Gandharvas have two categories according to the Upanishads and Brahmins—viz. the ‘Dev-Gandharvas’ and ‘Manushya-Gandharvas’. The former are the entertainers of the Gods and live in the heaven, while the latter live on earth and are regarded as professional singers and dancers. The ‘Dev’ category of Gandharvas have a long life equivalent to the life of Gods and regarded as ‘immortal’ in a relative sense when compared to their human or ‘Manushya’ counterparts who have a very short life-span and therefore called mortal.

They are said to be the sons of Kashyap Prajapati and his wife Arishta. Their chief is called ‘Chitra Rath’. The Apsaras are said to be their wives. Some of the Gandharvas are the following—Tumburu, Haa-haa, Huu-huu, Vishvaa-vasu, Chitrasena, Vidyaa-dhar, Paraa-vasu, and Viraadha. They are controlled by Varun.

According to Taittiriya Aaranyaka, (i, 9, 3), there are eleven sub-classes of Gandharvas. But according to Agni Puran, the Gandharvas have twelve sub-classes, and they are Abhrajya, Andhaari, Rambhaari, Suryavarchaa, Kridhu, Hasta, Suhasta, Swun/Swan, Murdahwaan, Mahaamanaa, Vishwaa-vasu, and Krishaanu.

The Gandharvas are celestial performers of dance and music. Even in the world, those who adopt dancing and singing as their profession are called Gandharvas. They are always flamboyantly dressed, wear a make up that creates an illusion of beauty and charm, and create a fascinating magical set for their dance and music performances. They live a life that is colourful and flamboyant externally, their dwellings are also equally well-decorated, charming and colourful, creating an illusion of well being and prosperity, but this is not the reality as they are regarded as being of a lowly category in the hierarchy of celestial beings in the heaven or even amongst other men in this world, and are usually treated as creatures of a low moral such as whores and pimps. The stages or platforms they create while presenting their skills are very illusive and deceptive like the world of dreams created on stage by a magician. They are short-term and last as long as the play lasts, for soon afterwards they are dismantled and tucked away for storage. In short, what these Gandharvas present on the face of it is far away from the reality, and should never be taken at its face value. If one believes in a Gandharva and keeps his company then it is certain that he would fall from grace and be abhorred by the rest of the civilised and cultured society for keeping bad company, of being pervert and of a low moral.

They are celestial musicians who belong to a class of lower rung semi-Gods who lived in the company of celestial damsels, called Apsaras, who danced for the entertainment of the Gods, who guarded the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, who were experts in treating various diseases, who were able to exercise mystical control over women and held them under their spell and charm, who sometimes tormented humans in the guise of some evil spirit, and who were great experts in the art and skill of playing music of all kinds. The word has other connotations also—it refers to those Gods who had the face of a horse or a deer; that Atma which has left one body and acquired another one; a tribe whose are professional singers and whose girls are professional prostitutes; the second husband of a widow who has remarried.

The Gandharvas are mythological musicians of the Gods. They live in decorated cities and also deck themselves up in all finery like stage players. According to mythology, they conjure up fascinating scenes of an equally fascinating world of majestic charm, just like a magician does on stage, to entertain the Gods. Therefore, they are used

as a metaphor to describe anything that is not real but looks very charming and attractive from the outside because they create a magic spell of stupendously unimaginable beauty, pomp and grandeur when they perform in the heaven. All their creation are temporary and last only till the time the theatre is being played; as soon as the show is over, they wind up everything and vanish from sight. But it is all an imagination because there is no such thing as a heaven where dancing and singing occurs. The term is used as a metaphor for illusive charm and fascination with something which has no substance.

So, philosophically, this body and the world are compared to the Gandharvas and their cities because of the similarity of attractiveness of the illusions created, and the transience and impermanence of both.

The word also refers to those bards, minstrels and people who are professional singers. They flock to an exalted person of the stature of the one who has attained enlightenment by realising the Atma, and they sing his glories and achievements. This helps to spread his fame far and wide in all the corners of the world because these singers go everywhere and sing hymns highlighting the glories and achievements of such exalted people from one generation to another. For example, the great poet saints of India have spread the glories of the Lord by the means of singing devotional hymns called 'Bhajans' in the honour of their patron deity. Similarly, royal bards and minstrels employed by great kings had composed verses honouring and lauding their patron king.

The word Gandharva has other connotations also—it refers to those Gods who had the face of a horse or a deer; that Atma which has left one body and acquired another one; a tribe whose are professional singers and whose girls are professional prostitutes; the second husband of a widow who has remarried.

H—

(12) Hanuman—A life sketch of Hanuman is narrated in the following scriptures—(i) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 155-190; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Sarga (Canto) 66, verse nos. 1-17 (as narrated by Jamvant, the Bear king); Uttar Kand, Sarga 35-36 (as described to Sri Ram by sage Agastya).

Lord Hanuman was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Ram. His devotion for Lord Ram had no match. He is regarded as the wisest, the most enlightened and a highly self-realised soul. He is an incarnation of the eleventh form of Lord Shiva that is known as Rudra. When Lord Vishnu decided to manifest himself as Lord Ram in this world, all the different Gods has assumed various forms to serve the Lord. Shiva had taken the form of Hanuman to serve Lord Ram.

According to the Purans (mythological histories), the name of his mother was Anjana who was the wife of the monkey king Kesari. He was born as a grace of the Wind God, also known as Marut. Hence, Hanuman was also known as 'Anjaneya' or 'Maruti'. However, his most common name 'Hanuman' is derived from the fact that once he had been hit by the 'Vajra', the hard weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. The story goes that once, a little time after his birth, the infant Hanuman had felt extremely hungry, and seeing the rising sun he thought it to be some ripe red fruit dangling from the sky. So he leapt to the sky to eat the rising sun. Incidentally, it was the time of the solar eclipse, when, according to mythology, the head of the demon known as Rahu was proceeding to devour the sun. When he saw Hanuman rushing towards the sun, Rahu ran away scared,

thinking that Hanuman was some competitor who was out there to grab his food. Rahu complained to Indra, the king of Gods, that he is being denied his regular meal. At this, Indra intervened. When Hanuman saw Indra approaching astride his white majestic elephant known as Eraavat, he thought that it was some other white fruit. So he left sun alone and instead leapt at Eraavat. Indra was shocked, confounded and perplexed, and in order to stop Hanuman he threw his formidable weapon known as Vajra. The Vajra hit him on the chin, thereby causing a dent. The jaw swelled as result. This incident gave 'Hanuman' his famous name.

The word 'Hanu' means the lower jaw, the chin, while 'Maan' means to hit to subdue or defeat. Another interpretation is that 'Hanu' means to crush, to trounce, to take away, or to eliminate, and 'Maan' means one's pride, arrogance, haughtiness and ego. So the composite word 'Hanuman' refers to this incident when Indra had subdued the son of the Wind God by breaking his chin-bone as a token punishment for him being extremely arrogant and unnecessarily mischievous.

But when the Wind God saw Hanuman hurt, he became extremely angry as Hanuman was born as his grace, so he stopped the movement of air. This caused suffocation in this creation and all the Gods were on the verge of asphyxiation. So they appeased the Wind God by blessing Hanuman with invincibility and formidable powers. This made Hanuman immortal and immune to the dangers of fire, water and wind.

Once as a child he was even cursed by sages because of his mischievous nature as he used to play havoc with the trees and plants around the hermitages and forests where they lived, uprooting them, breaking their branches, eating their fruits and littering the place all around. So they cursed him that he would forget his powers till the time someone reminded him about them. As it happened, when the monkeys and bears set out in search of Sita, who had been abducted by the demon king of Lanka known as Ravana, and had reached the shores of the vast ocean, they faced the formidable challenge of having to cross it, face this formidable enemy, and come back alive. It was then that Jamvant, the old patriarch of the bears, had reminded Hanuman about his lost strength. Hanuman regained his old stupendous powers and abilities, and he was the one who not only crossed the ocean but also burnt Lanka before coming back with the news of Sita. These events are narrated in the epic Ramayana in great detail.

Hanuman can be likened to a diamond amongst all the characters in the epic story of Ramayan which deals with Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Lord Ram. In fact, the story of Lord Ram and his conquest of Lanka would not have been what it was without Hanuman. Even Lord Ram had openly accepted his indebtedness to Hanuman.

It is believed that when Lord Ram left this world for his heavenly abode during the final episodes of Ramayana, all those who were close to him as well as the rest of his subjects had also left this world with the Lord. But Hanuman remained behind with the express mandate from the Lord to ensure that the Lord's glory as well as the glory of his divine name can be perpetuated, and to ensure that the devotees of the Lord can be afforded protection. This has been narrated in (i) Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 9, verse nos. 34-36; (ii) Anand Ramayan, Purva Kand, Sarga (Canto) 5, verse nos. 9-13; (iii) Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 108, verse nos. 32-35.

Hanuman had immense mental and physical agility, strength and prowess. His character was immaculate and his intellect was of high refinement. He had complete,

unchallenged and unparalleled knowledge of the scriptures. One of the reasons is that his teacher was the Sun God himself who had taught him all the Vedas and other scriptures. His speech was elegant and scholarly. He is regarded as a treasury of the eight Siddhis (mystical powers) and the nine Nidhis (spiritual assets). He was a renunciate and a celibate since birth.

The eight Siddhis which Hanuman possessed were the following—(i) ‘Anima’—means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; to become small like an atom; (ii) ‘Mahima’—is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and skills; to become huge like a mountain, thereby standing out and being unique or special in a crowd; (iii) ‘Garima’—is to be heavy-weight in any field, to have special qualities that give one’s ideas and words a great amount of importance and weight; to have stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance; (iv) ‘Laghima’—is the grand virtue of being simple and humble inspite of being great, powerful and authoritative; it is to have simplicity and humility despite possessing grandeur, majesty, power, authority and magnificence; (v) ‘Praapti’—is to be able to attain, gain or obtain anything wished or desired for; (vi) ‘Praakramya’—is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’—is to be able to have lordship or sway over everything else; to be able to rule over others; (viii) ‘Vashitwa’—is to be able to control and subdue others, and exert influence on them so much so that they become obedient and subservient.

The nine Nidhis that Hanuman possessed were the following— Spiritual assets—according to saint Tulsidas’ epic Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha 35-36, they are—(i) communion with saints and pious people where the Lord’s glories are being sung, (ii) serving one’s teacher and elders, (iii) praising the Lord’s glories and doing Kirtan and Bhajan which are community singing of the Lord’s glories, (iv) repeating the divine Mantras or holy words of the Lord, i.e. doing Japa, (v) having such virtues as ‘Dam’ or tolerance, patience, fortitude and resilience, ‘Sheel’ or good and righteous demeanors, ‘Virati’ or being renunciate and detached from deeds and to be dispassionate towards the world, ‘Sam’ or equanimity, looking everything as Brahm, having a non-dual approach of or view of the world, ‘Santosh’ or contentedness, and ‘Saral’ or simplicity and humility, (vi) having no deceit, conceit and falsehoods, (vii) not finding faults with others and criticising them unnecessarily, (viii) to have firm reliance and faith in the Lord, and (ix) not to feel dejected, depressed, despaired, inferior, lowly and condemned under any adverse circumstances, because the great and merciful Lord is always with them.

According to another version, the nine Nidhis are the various special virtues or qualities or attributes that one possesses, and which make him special amongst others. They are the following—(i) Buddhi—intelligence and the power to discriminate, to think sharply, quickly, logically, rationally, deeply and analytically. (ii) Bal—strength, vigour and power of the body and of the mind as well as of the spirit. (iii) Yasha—fame, good reputation and name; majesty and renown. (iv) Dhairya—to have courage, fortitude, resilience, ability to hold on in the face of greatest adversity, misfortune and opposition. (v) Nirbhayataa—fearlessness, courage, bravery and an indomitable spirit. (vi) Aarogyataa—to be freed from diseases and illnesses, both mental as well as bodily. (vii) Ajaadyataa—the opposite of Jadataa; to be free from the negative trait of inertia,

lethargy, depression, stagnation, lack of drive, initiative and will power. (viii) Vaakyapatutaa—to be an expert orator; speaking skills, eloquence, diplomacy, and wise and intelligent choice of the spoken word. (ix) Bhakti—to have steady and robust devotion, loyalty, dedication and conviction for one's chosen deity and faith. This quality, of course, comes under the category of spiritual assets also.

Other variations include the following qualities in this list of Nidhis because they are like an asset for a man which stand him in good stead in his life— (i) Sham—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses. (ii) Dam—tolerance, forbearance, fortitude. (iii) Upriti—renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement. (iv) Titksha—endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity. (v) Samadhan—the ability to find a solution, an answer to even the most vexing problem; lack of confusion or doubts; clarity of thoughts and conception. (vi) Shraddha—having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion. (vii) Sakhya—friendship and the ability to co-exist with even one's adversary. (viii) Daya—kindness, compassion, graciousness. (ix) Atma Bodh—self-realisation and being enlightened about the Atma, the pure consciousness, that resides inside one's inner self as his soul, as his spirit.

Sometimes, the last Nidhi of Atma Bodh is replaced with 'Seva' or the natural habit of serving others selflessly.

Faces of Hanuman—In iconography, Hanuman is depicted as having five, ten or eleven faces.

(a) The *five faces* of Hanuman are as follows—(i) in the eastern direction it is that of a monkey; (ii) in the southern direction it is that of Lord Nrisingh; (iii) in the western direction it is that of Lord Garud; (iv) in the northern direction it is that of Lord Varaaha; and (v) in the zenith it is that of Lord Hayagriva.

The genesis of the story is linked with the battle of Lanka when the son of the ten-headed Ravana, known as Mahi-Ravan, had kidnapped Ram and Laxman and hid them underground in the nether world. He prepared them to sacrifice to the goddess whom he worshipped in order to please the goddess so that his father Ravana could win the war. When Hanuman got the wind of it, he went to the nether world and hid behind the idol of the goddess. The demon Mahi-Ravana offered all sorts of inedible things to the goddess—such as wine, excreta, meat, urine etc. He had his eyes closed in meditation. So Hanuman assumed this heads and ate up all the offerings. Finally, when the wicked demon thought that the sacrifice is finished and the goddess is happy with him, he was about to chop off the heads of the two brothers at the altar, Hanuman emerged from hiding in this ferocious form with five heads (or according to the previous narration with eleven unconventional heads) to kill the demon. It is believed that even Ram and Laxman could not recognize Hanuman in that form till the time they saw his monkey head with which he bowed before the Lord.

In essence we can say that Hanuman epitomised the glory of knowledge and the Shakti of the Supreme Brahm rolled into one. When he appeared to save Ram and Laxman from the clutches of Mahi-Ravana, he represented the supreme power of creation. This form of Hanuman—whether it is of five heads or nine heads or eleven heads—implies that all the fundamental forces of Nature had joined hands to get rid of or

negate the negative forces that had become ascendant, and to restore the balance in favour of the positive forces and principles of creation.

The five faces of Hanuman stand for the following—(i) the five elements of creation, viz. sky, air, fire, water and earth. (ii) the five chief vital winds called Prans—viz. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana and Udaana. This fits in perfectly with the fact that Hanuman is regarded as the son of the Wind God.

(b) The *ten or eleven faces* of Hanuman—According to another version, Hanuman is shown as having eleven or ten faces as follows—(i) in the eastern direction it is that of a monkey (Hanuman in his original form); (ii) in the south-east corner (called ‘Agneya Kona’) it is that of a Kshatriya (warrior class); (iii) in the southern direction it is that of Lord Nrisingh (half man and half lion incarnation of Vishnu); (iv) in the south-west corner (called ‘Nairitya Kona’) it is that of Lord Ganesh; (v) in the western direction it is that of Harishwar (Hari or Vishnu; or it can be interpreted as Hari’s Lord or Shiva in line with the term Rameshwar which is one of the forms of Shiva); (vi) in the north-west corner (called ‘Vaayavya Kona’) it is that of Lord Bhairav (one of the forms of Shiva); (vii) in the northern direction it is that of Varaha; (viii) in the north-east corner (called ‘Ishan Kona’) it is that of Lord Rudra (one of the forms of Shiva); and (ix) in the zenith corner (above; towards the sky) it is that of Lord Hayagriva (Lord Sun; Vishnu with a horse’s head; one of the many incarnations of Vishnu).

In this above description only nine faces are given; two are missing. The other two faces are that of Lord Garuda (mount of Vishnu) and Lord Shiva. In this version, the face on the west side is that of Garuda (instead of Harishwar), and Lord Varaha faces in the lower direction called nadir. The eleventh face is a combination of all the faces—i.e. it is the face of all-encompassing and all-incorporating Lord Isha.

The point to note here is that all these forms are manifestations or representations of the five or the eleven principal ‘Tattwas’ or the fundamental elements of creation. The eleven heads are symbols of the following Tattwas—the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) + five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana and Udaana) + Chitta (mind and its sub-conscious). These eleven Tattwas form the basic units which combine together to form the physical body of any living being.

It will be noted that only nine specific heads are mentioned though the total number of heads are eleven. Well, the significance of the number ‘nine’ vis-à-vis the nine Tattwas is as follows—

‘The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 14 says that there are nine Tattvas which are actually subtle revelations of the supreme Brahm. They are the following—The three fundamental Gunas, i.e. the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, the three basic characters of the Atma known as Sat-Chit-Anand, i.e. Sat (truth), Chitta (consciousness) and Anand (bliss), and the three forms of divinity represented by the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder of creation, represent the nine Tattwas of creation.

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 says that the sacred thread that is worn by Brahmins has three main strands, and each strand consists of three sub-strands. The total number of strands thus becomes nine ($3 \times 3 = 9$). These nine strands symbolically represent the nine Tattwas of creation which actually stand for the nine revelations of the same Brahm. The fact that the sacred thread has nine finer strands is endorsed in the *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 27.’

It must be remembered that Hanuman is not an ordinary soul, but he is the most enlightened One to have come on this earth. He is regarded as the leader in the community of the wise and enlightened ones. There is no wonder in it because of two reasons—one, he is Shiva personified, and Shiva is the most enlightened amongst the Trinity Gods, and second, his teacher was the Sun God who is personification of the Supreme Brahman, and his brilliant light is a metaphor of the immensity of knowledge and enlightenment he has as well as the light this knowledge provides to the world. Without knowledge this world would be engulfed in a thick shroud of darkness of ignorance symbolized by the night.

The importance of the figure five is of great metaphysical importance. It represents the Pancha Mahaabh. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety. They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of *Shaarirako-panishad*. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the subtle space between various organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five

Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

I—

(13) Incarnations of Lord Vishnu—e.g. Matsya, Kashap, Varaaha, Nrisingh, Vaaman, Krishna—

The ten main Avatars/incarnations of Vishnu—

(i) *Matsya* or Fish incarnation of Vishnu—In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah's Arc.

(ii) *Kurma* or Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu—It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

(iii) *Varaaha* or Boar incarnation of Vishnu—It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

(iv) *Nrisingh* or half man and half lion incarnation of Vishnu—Lord *Nrisingh* or *Narsingh* is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped Vishnu. Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh to kill the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting his own son Prahalad because the child was a devout follower of Vishnu. After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest

and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. [Refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 8.] Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Iconographically, there are many forms of Nrisingh. Some of them are as follows—as seated (Aasin), as standing (Sthaanak), as boon-giver (Vardaayak), as ferocious and angry (Ugra), as striding (Yaanak), in the company of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Vishnu (Laxmi-Nrisingh), as seated in Yoga or doing meditation like Shiva (Yoga-Nrisingh), as a resident of a mountain (Girija), etc.

His images depict him in either the two-hand form or in a four-hand form. In the latter case, the two back hands hold a conch and discus like the case of Vishnu. The two front hands are shown as killing the demon Hiranyakashipu by forcing the latter on his lap, tearing his abdomen, and yanking his entrails out by his sharp nails.

An entire Puran called Narsingh Puran is likewise dedicated to this Godhead. This Puran glorifies Nrisingh as an incarnation of Vishnu, and is regarded as being synonymous with Narayan, one of the names of Lord Vishnu who is none but the Supreme Being called Brahm. Since Lord Vishnu himself is a macrocosmic, all-inclusive and invisible form of the supreme transcendental Brahm, therefore Nrisingh is a de-facto visible form of the otherwise invisible Brahm.

Similarly, an entire Upanishad known as the *Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition is dedicated to this deity. It also lists the various divine Mantras dedicated to Lord Nrisingh. It is the 7th Upanishad of this Veda.

The *Shukar Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 27, while describing the process of invoking one of the components ‘Asi’ (‘is’) of the Maha Vakya (the great saying of the Vedas) ‘Tattwamasi’ (‘that essence is you’) says that the Shakti (dynamic energy) of this individual component ‘Asi’ is Nrisingh.

The *Skanda Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 13 praises Lord Nrisingh as an incarnation of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector, and Shiva the concluder of creation. His divine and glorious virtues are similar to Brahm. Earlier in this Upanishad it has already been established that these three Gods of the Trinity are Brahm personified, as well as the fact that the creature’s Atma or pure ‘self’ which is Consciousness personified, are also Brahm personified. Hence, by worshipping Nrisingh one is offering prayers to Brahm and honouring the grand virtues of creation exemplified by the latter. He is also offering worship to the ‘consciousness’ that represents Brahm in the physical body of Lord Nrisingh.

(v) *Vaaman/Vaman* or the Dwarf incarnation of Vishnu—This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. When Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He

approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a 'Vaaman' or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali's own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali. He put his third step on Bali's head and pushed the latter to the nether world. Hence, Vishnu is also called 'Trivikram'—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps. But the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice done to a magnanimous Bali who had been righteous and firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitments. So, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gatekeeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.

(vi) *Parashuram* or Ram with a battle-axe—This is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the son of sage Jamdaagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others.

(vii) *Lord Ram*—This was the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. Ram was born in the Ikshwaku dynasty belonging to the solar race that ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya as the son of Dasrath and his eldest queen Kaushalya. In this incarnation, Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity who is the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, accompanied him as Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram. The epic story of Ramayan in which the Lord slayed the arrogant and cruel demon Ravana is woven around this incarnation. Lord Ram exemplified the grand virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, propriety and probity, and is therefore lauded as the 'Maryada Purshottam'—the excellent male who always observed the strictest code of proper conduct. Lord Ram's divine name 'Ram' is regarded as a Tarak Mantra—i.e. a Mantra that has the spiritual power to bestow liberation and deliverance to the creature. There are three Upanishads dedicated to the Lord—viz. Ram Purvatapini Upanishad, Ram Uttartapini Upanishad and Mukti Upanishad. The former two belong to the Atharva Veda tradition, and the third to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

Lord Ram manifested himself in the Treta Yug which is the second era of the four-era one cycle of creation according to Hindu philosophy.

(viii) *Lord Balraam*—This is the regarded as the eighth incarnation of Vishnu. Balram was the strong elder brother of Lord Krishna of the Mahabharat fame. Both Balram and Krishna, being brothers, were born in Dwapar Yug which was the third era of the four-era cycle of creation. At the time of his death, the celestial serpent Sheshnath emerged from his mouth giving credence to the theory that he was an incarnation of Sheshnath who had earlier manifested himself as Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram during the seventh incarnation of Vishnu.

If this is the case then according to some scholars it would not be proper to include Balraam as an incarnation of Vishnu. Therefore, Balraam is excluded from the list and Lord Krishna is regarded as the eighth incarnation.

If this is taken into account, then it is suggested that Lord Buddha who established Buddhism is to be regarded as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu instead of it being Lord Krishna.

(ix) *Lord Krishna*—Krishna is the ninth incarnation of Vishnu. He is a well known deity and it is he who had pronounced the famous Gita and preached it to Arjun on the eve of the epic Mahabharata war. Krishna's story is narrated in full in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran. But according to some accounts, Krishna is the eighth incarnation replacing Balraam. This has been explained above.

(x) *Kalki*—This would be Vishnu's tenth and last incarnation before one cycle of creation ends. It is predicted that he would be born during the present Kali Yug, which is the fourth and the last era. He is visualized as riding on the back of a white horse, a drawn sword in hand, eliminating evil-mongers and those who are opposed to Dharma or righteous way of life. His main aim would be to restore Dharma.

Besides the above described ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, there are said to be fourteen more minor Avtaars or incarnations of Vishnu, thereby bringing the total number of incarnations to *twenty-four Avtaars* or incarnations of Vishnu. They are also called the twenty-four *Vyuhas* of Vishnu, and they are the various manifestations of the Lord on different occasions to fulfill his obligations of taking care of the creation.

Aside of the ten Avtaars described above, the rest of the fourteen other Avtaars are briefly the following—

(xi) Sages Sankaadi, (xii) Sage Narad, (xiii) Sage Kapil, (xiv) Sage Veda Vyas, (xv) Lord Nar-Narayan, (xvi) Lord Dattatreya, (xvii) Lord Rishabdeo, (xviii) King Prithu, (xix) Dhanvantri, (xx) Mohini, (xxi) Lord Hayagriva, (xxii) Sri Hari, (xxiii) The Yagya or the sacred Fire sacrifice as a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and (xxiv) The Hans, the divine Swan.

(14) *Indra*—*Indra* is the king of Gods who can fulfill all the desires of the aspirant like any king when he is pleased by the person who prays to him for his gracious intervention. Indra represents the chief forces of life that controls the functioning of Nature. He derives his name from 'Indri' meaning the sense organs of the body—five organs of perception and five organs of action. The vital functions and the virtues of each of these organs are personified as a God, and the authority who controls them is their Lord called Indra. Indra is a metaphor for, or a personification of the combined virtues and characteristics that define all these organs and their functioning. Being at the helm of affairs, Indra is like the King or Emperor of all the other personified forces and powers of creation.

At the time of creation, all the Gods had taken their abodes in one or the other organ of the newly born creature. Indra was conceived as a factor that combines all the aspects of life in one entity. The chief controller of life factors in the body of a living being is called Indra. He is a personified form of life in the organs (Indris) of the body.

At the macro level of creation he is like the supreme Brahm who is the Lord of all that exists, while at the micro level of the individual creature he is like the Atma (pure consciousness) and the Pran (the vital winds that sustain life inside the body).

The various functions that the organs perform inside the body of the creature are represented by their own set of patron Gods who personify these functions and the various qualities of these individual organs. Since *Pran*, the vital winds present in the body that govern its functioning, is at the core of life in a creature's body, it is like Indra at the micro level.

Since the heart is at the core of life of a man, the central authority that regulates all these Gods is also said to have its seat in the heart. That authority is the emperor of the body and its organs, and it is known as the Atma. Therefore, this *Atma* is also like Indra as far as the individual creature is concerned.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 62 describes that the Atma, the pure consciousness has manifested itself as Indra as well as all other Gods including Rudra (an angry form of Shiva) and Brahma (the creator). This is because Indra is the Lord of all the Gods who are represented by the various forces of Nature and is also the Lord of the creature as he is the Lord of his organs. The word Indra is derived from the root 'Indri' meaning 'organs of the body' such as the five organs of perception and five organs of action. He is the Lord of rains indicating his prominence as the Lord of life, fertility and vibrancy because the rains and clouds bring life to this world. He has the vital wind force as his comrade-in-arm, indicating his control over all forms of activity and movement that characteristic life in this world. He enjoys the best things in heaven, being the king of Gods. He is very powerful and holds the thunderbolt in his hands to subdue his enemies. The Atma also exhibits these virtues.

According to *Brihad Aranakya Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 6, this Indra is a synonym for *Brahm* both at the macro level because Brahm is the supreme Lord of the entire creation represented by the innumerable forces of Nature called the various Gods at the macro level (and that is why we have so many Gods), as well as at the micro level of the individual creature because the Pran is the vital life supporting entity present in the body without which none of the organs would have their relevance, as well as the Atma or pure consciousness without which even this Pran would lose its relevance.

The king is offered the best of foods and drinks that are available in his kingdom. So this Indra God is also offered the best food and drink in the form of the ambrosia called 'Som'. It is an invigorating drink that is extracted from a creeper by the same name. It is used during sacrificial rituals, and it is offered to Gods that is supposed to bestow them with an eternal life of bliss. It is said to be stored in the heavenly pitcher of the moon. From the metaphysical point of view, since Indra represents the superior authority that controls all the other Gods representing the various sense organs, it follows that whatever the organs acquire are first offered to Indra before the other Gods representing these organs partake of it. Amongst the organs, it is the hand that helps the body to acquire things from the outside world. Since the organs have an intrinsic tendency to move towards pleasing things in this world and move away from unpleasant things, it is deemed that their messenger, the hand, brings to them only selected and best of things available, which is like bringing Amrit or Som for them so that they can offer it to their king Indra.

In *Taittiriyo-panishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli (Canto) 1, Anuvak (sub-canto) 4, Indra is the God who is offered worship through the fire sacrifice invoking his divine intercession and patronage so that the aspirant is blessed with obtaining success in acquiring eclectic qualities and wisdom as well as material well being and worldly fame.

Indra is both the 'Atma' of the living being because the latter is the undisputed emperor of the body as its consciousness, as well as the 'Pran' or the various vital winds present in the body that control all its vital functions and sustain life.

Indra is also the Lord of rains and clouds, and since rain is a metaphor for life and fertility, and the clouds are the carriers of such life-bearing seeds, Indra too is regarded as the Lord of life and its protector, sustainer and developer. That is why Indra, in this role, is regarded as one of the eight Digpals.

Indra, who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, is therefore called 'Sahastraaksha',

In *Taittiriya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 1, Anuvak 4, verse no. 1 (stanza 3), Indra is invoked by the wise teacher to bless him with the virtues of Medhaa (i.e. with the virtues of intelligence, wisdom, prudence, wit, understanding and comprehension).

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 38 says that Indra is one of the ten Digpaals or custodians of the ten directions of the celestial globe. He is the patron deity of the eastern direction and worshipped in that corner. Verse no. 39 says that his weapon is Vajra. This weapon is made of the hardest material in existence and is said to be manifested in the form of the thunderbolt. This is because Indra is said to be the commander of the rains and rain-bearing clouds.

According to the Rig Veda, 1/ 4-5; 51-57, Indra represents the combined forces of Nature represented by the different Gods. He loves to drink Som, the elixir of bliss and eternity (Rig Veda, 3/ 36/ 8). He has the Wind God called Marut as his chief assistant.

Indra appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/4-5, 51-57; 5/29; 7/19-32; 8/15-17; 10/111-113; Sam Veda—52/115-148 etc.; Yajur Veda—3/34; 7/5; 7/39; Atharva Veda—8/8; 20/1.

The *Devi Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 4 says that Indra is a manifestation of the Mother Goddess, who actually represents the dynamism of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess is the energy, authority, strength and powers of Brahm that are employed by the latter to create and control this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. Indra is therefore the dynamism of Brahm revealed at the macrocosmic level.

Indra is called 'Sahastraaksha' (literally meaning to have thousand eyes) because he is said to have thousands of eyes over his body as the result of a curse by sage Gautam to punish him for being sexually pervert as he had the vile temerity of having attempted sex with the sage's loyal wife in his absence by employing deceit. The lecherous Indra had assumed the physical body of the sage to satisfy his lust, but was caught by the sage. So the sage cursed him to have a thousand holes in his body. These 'holes' represented the female vagina, and the curse was in the form of sarcastic curse on Indra so that now onwards he would be able to see a woman's sexual organs spread all over his own body with thousands of eyes instead of only two to satisfy his lust and perversions. It was also intended to tell the world in a symbolic manner about the punishment that one gets by

being excessively lustful in the sense that one instance of lecherousness would create thousands of horrible spots that would taint a man's character and personality forever, no matter how socially established or well-placed he may be. After all, Indra was a king of Gods, and one can imagine his discomfiture that he would have to remain with a pot-holed and scarred body for the rest of his life.

K—

(15) King Dasrath—He was the king of the kingdom of Avadh, also called Kaushal, with its headquarters at Ayodhya which was also called Kaushal Puri. In his early life he was a very brave and valiant king who had conquered great kingdoms and expanded his empire to a vast surface of the earth. He had even helped the Gods in their wars. He was so brave and invincible that his chariot could go in all the ten directions of the compass, hence the name 'Dasrath'—meaning one whose 'Rath' (chariot) could go in 'Das' (ten) directions. The ten directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, nadir and zenith.

But later on in life as he became old he became weak and lustful. He had three chief queens out of whom he was too enamoured of his wife Kaikeyi who is believed to be exceptionally beautiful. His one weakness was his compulsive nature—for he made promises at the drop of a hat. On one such occasion he had given two vows to Kaikeyi during a battle when he discovered that she had saved his chariot from toppling over when the axle of one of the wheels had broken and Kaikeyi had immediately thrust her hand inside to act as the axle. At the end of the battle which Dasrath won he saw Kaikeyi bleeding profusely, and upon enquiry he was so pleased that he gave her two boons. As it turned out later on these were the two boons that Kaikeyi exploited in asking for the exile of Ram and coronation of her own son Bharat on the throne of Ayodhya, the single incident which became central to the story of the epic Ramayana.

In his previous life he was Manu, the first male who was the patriarch of the rest of the creatures on earth. His wife was Satrupa who later on became Kaushalya. Manu had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to get Lord Vishnu as his son. So Lord Vishnu became his son in the Lord's incarnation as Lord Ram.

Dasrath had no sons and so he performed a fire sacrifice to get one. The Fire God blessed him and gave him a bowl of sweet pudding, asking the king to distribute it to his queens. It was a blessed pudding and the four brothers, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were born as a result of the queens eating this pudding.

Death of this great king of the Raghu dynasty was in tragic circumstances. When Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had gone to forest exile, he had died out of grief.

(16) Kaushalya—She was the chief queen of Dasrath and the mother of Lord Ram.

(17) Kaikeyi—She was the mother of Bharat and Shatrughan, and was instrumental in sending Lord Ram to the forest for 14 years of exile so that her son Bharat could become a king. She is depicted in the Ramayan as a cunning, selfish, jealous, merciless and scheming lady.

(18) King Janak—He was the father of Sita and the father-in-law of Ram. He was the king of Janakpur. He was also known as ‘Videha’—which literally means one who is not aware of his gross body. The reason is that he was an exceptionally enlightened king who was an expert in spiritual, theological and metaphysical knowledge. Great congregation of sages, saints and seers of the time were held in his reign when debates on metaphysics, theology and spiritualism were held and huge prizes given. The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 1-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition mention one such great congregation where great sages and seers had participated, and where sage Yagyawalkya was finally declared the undisputed winner, while Canto 4, Brahman 1-4 describe how Janak had accepted Yagyawalkya as his teacher and asked the latter to preach him.

Another place where sage Yagyawalkya teaches king Janak is the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition. In its Brahman (Canto) 7, verse nos. 1-4, the king is taught on the spiritual importance of the sacred ash known as the Bhasma. Verse no. 5 of this Brahman 7 says that king Janak accompanied sage Pippalaad to the divine abode of Prajapati Brahma, the creator, to learn more about the Bhasma. This shows that Janak was a contemporary of sage Pippalaad.

The level of Janak’s learning and erudition is evident from another incident when sage Shukdeo, the enlightened son of sage Veda Vyas who had classified the Vedas, compiled the Upanishads, and written the voluminous Purans, was advised by his learned father to go to king Janak to learn profound principles of metaphysics and spiritualism. Janak had tested Shukdeo’s eligibility, aptitude and competence by making him wait for prolonged time before even giving him a hearing. The entire episode along with the profound teachings of Janak forms the subject matter of the text of Canto 2 of the Mahopanishad of the Sam Veda tradition.

In the Ithihas-Purans, especially the one dealing with Lord Ram such as the epic Ramayana, he is shown as being the father of Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram. He is called ‘Videha’ because he was so highly enlightened and self-realised that he knew the truth of the teaching of the Upanishads that the ‘self’ is not the gross body but the pure consciousness Atma, the soul, the spirit. This led him to be totally detached and disinterested in his body and what it does. He was so unconcerned about the body that for all practical purposes the body did not exist for him—i.e. he was ‘one without a body’, or a ‘Videha’.

(19) Kinnar—They are dancers and singers in the court of Indra, the king of Gods.

(20) Lord Ram and his three brothers—Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan—

Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu during the Hindu era of Treta Yuga. This was the second era of the four eras that constitute one cycle of creation and destruction. Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being. Whereas the Supreme Being known as Vishnu or the Viraat Purush is invisible and all-pervading in this creation, the Lord’s visible human form that has a physical body is known as Lord Ram.

In Atharva Veda there are two Upanishads especially dedicated to Lord Ram—viz. the Ram Rashasya Upanishad and the Ram Tapini Upanishad. The divine Mantra of Lord Ram, which is in essence his basic name ‘Raam’ is regarded as the ‘Tarak Mantra’—i.e. a powerful spiritual tool that helps the spiritual aspirant to achieve liberation and deliverance from this mundane world and find permanent emancipation and salvation for his soul. His mother was Kaushalya, and his wife was Sita.

Laxman was the younger brother of Lord Ram and regarded as an incarnation of Lord Shesh Nath, the legendary serpent who is said to support the world (earth) on its one thousand hoods. Laxman had accompanied Lord Ram during his sojourn in the forest. His mother was Sumitra.

Bharat and Shatrughan were two other brothers of Lord Ram, and their mother was Kaikeyi. Bharat has made him famous by refusing to accept the throne of Ayodhya which his crooked mother had planned for him by sending Ram to the forest in exile. Shatrughan always stayed with Bharat just like Laxman who followed Ram like a shadow.

P—

(21) Prahalad— He was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was the eldest son of the king of demons, named Hiranyakashipu. His mother was Kayaadhu, the daughter of the demon king named Jambhaasur. Both the mother and the son were initiated by sage Narad who had inspired them to become devotees of Lord Vishnu.

The story of Prahalad is narrated in detail in (i) Vishnu Puran, 1/17, and (ii) Bhagvata Puran, 7/4-8.

The father, being a demon, was an inveterate opponent of Lord Vishnu, and so naturally he couldn't tolerate his own son worshipping his enemy Lord Vishnu. He tried his best to dissuade Prahalad from being devoted to the Lord, but the son had immense faith in the Lord and would not be deterred by his father's threats and scolding. Hiranyakashipu tried even cruel means to change Prahalad, including an attempt to burn in a raging fire, but the child devotee escaped unscathed. So, finally the demon father decided to kill him personally. Prahalad was tied to a pillar and asked ‘Where is your Lord Vishnu? Is he in this pillar also?’ The child replied in the affirmative. Then his father swung the sword to kill him, and it was at this instant that Lord Vishnu revealed himself as the famous incarnation known as ‘Nrisingh’—the upper half of his body was like a lion and the lower half was like a man. An Upanishad titled ‘Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad’ of the Atharva Veda is dedicated to this Lord.

Lord Nrisingh snatched the sword and laid the demon father across his laps. He then tore through his abdomen, and yanked out his intestines, thereby killing the demon. He then picked up the child Prahalad on to his laps and lovingly licked and caressed him like a lion does to its cub. But Prahalad prayed to the Lord to provide deliverance to the soul of his father, at which the Lord liberated the demon from all his sins.

Prahalad is credited with enumerating the nine-fold path of Bhakti, the path of devotion for the Lord, in the epic Bhaagvata, 7/5/23.

Lord Dattatreya, one of the manifestations of Lord Vishnu, had preached Prahalad about the eclectic state of Avadhut Sanyasi in the form of a huge python, known as

Ajgara. Prahalad had spiritual discussions also with other sages such as Hansa (the divine Swan, an incarnation of Vishnu), and with Indra (the king of Gods). ,

Prahalad had four brothers, three sons and a daughter. The king of demons known as Bali, who was famous for his charities and donations, was a grandson of Prahalad. The incarnations of Vishnu as Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, is related to this legendary king.

S—

(22) Sita—Sita was the divine consort of Lord Ram. If Ram was an incarnate Vishnu then Sita was goddess Laxmi, the heavenly consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity. If Ram is to be treated as a personified form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm then Sita is Maya (delusion creating powers of Brahm) personified. The Sita Upanishad is the 9th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, and it describes the metaphysical importance of Sita. She was the daughter of king Janak. She is also known as ‘Vaidehi’ meaning the daughter of Videha, another name of Janak as well as the kingdom where he ruled.

(23) Sumitra—She was the mother of Laxman and a good friend of Kaushalya. She has been praised in the Ramayan by willingly allowing her son Laxman to go with Lord Ram when he was ordered to go to the forest for 14 years of exile.

(24) Sumantra—He was the chief minister in the court of king Dasrath. He was sent with a chariot by the king to try and persuade Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to come back and abandon the plan to go to the forest.

(25) Sage Agastya— Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a ‘Brahm-rishi’ or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as ‘Kumbha’. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vashistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vashistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them. Some of the demons however managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved

at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake.

He lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term 'Agastya' became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as 'Agastya', and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a 'bright star' and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the 'Agastya Sanhita' which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.

(26) Sages Sankaadi etc.— *Sanatkumar* and others called *Sankaadi Rishis*—Sage Sanatkumar is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanat-sujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood. Together they are called 'Sanakaadi Rishis'.

Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanat-sujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.

Sanatkumar, along with sages Pippalaad and Angira, had approached sage Atharva to ask him about the highest form of meditation, the different aspects of OM and the culmination of spiritual journey by realising Brahm in the form of Shambhu, one of the names of Lord Shiva, in Atharva Veda's Atharva-shikha Upanishad.

It is narrated in the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 7, verse no. 8, that he had gone to Lord Kalagnirudra, one of the forms of Lord Shiva and who had first revealed this Upanishad to one sage Bhusund (Brahmans 1-6) to learn about the metaphysical importance and spiritual value of the Rudraksha beads. [Rudraksha beads are the seeds of the tree *Eleocarpus ganitrus*.]

According to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Sanatkumar was taught how to wear the Tripundra, the three lines marked on the forehead of all Hindus, by Lord Kalagnirudra himself.

The Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sages as Sankadi and Sanatsujat (i.e. sages Sanatkumar and others collectively called the Sankaadi Rishis) had praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if these great sages had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

(27) Sage Vashistha— Sage Vashistha is one of the well known ancient sages and mentioned even in the Rig Veda (refer Rig Veda, 7/33/14). He is regarded as the Manas-putra of the creator Brahma. In other words, he was the mental-born son of Brahma born as a result of his decision to have a son. As such, he is one of the great celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis—or the seven great sages. According to another version, he was born in a Kumbh or a pitcher as a son of the Varuna God (the Water God). Another great sage named Agastya was his twin brother.

He was the court priest or Rajguru of the Ikshavaku clan belonging to the solar race who ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya. It was in this solar race that Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu around whom the epic Ramayan was written, was born. Vashistha is credited with one of the greatest treatises on Vedanta, called Yog Vashistha. It is also called Maha Ramayan.

Arundhati, also known as Akshamala and Urjaa, was the most erudite, sagacious and wise wife of sage Vashistha. She was the daughter of Prajapati Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Atri's wife Anusuiya was her sister, and sage Kapil was her brother. Her famous son was sage Shakti. She was a preacher and a well known scholar of the scriptures in her own right, and was no less enlightened than her husband Vashistha.

His son was sage Shakti. Sage Parashar was his grandson, and sage Veda Vyas, who is the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, was his great grandson.

The celebrated sage Kapil, who is said to be the proponent of the great school of Hindu philosophy known as Shankya Shastra, was the brother-in-law of sage Vashistha, being the brother of his wife Arundhati, and the only son of sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti. He taught even his mother spiritual wisdom in Bhagavata, and hence this part of this scripture is called 'Kapil Gita' in which the sage has expounded upon the philosophies of Sankhya Shastra, Ashtanga Yoga (the eight-fold path of Yoga) and Bhakti-yoga (the path of devotion for and submission to the Lord) (3/25-33).

There are a number of legends associated with Vashistha. One such tale narrates how his all-wish fulfilling cow named Nandini was attempted to be stolen by king Vishvarath, the son of Gaadhi. The attempt failed miserably. This king was so determined and in awe of Vashistha's mystical powers that had prevented him from acquiring this cow that he did severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to acquire similar powers. Thus, he became sage a great sage known as Vishwamitra.

The Sharva Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sage as Vashistha had

praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if Vashistha had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

(27) Sage Bharadwaj— Sage Bharadwaj is regarded as one of the seven celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis. Ironically, we find many ancient sages with this name, and therefore it is clear that this word was used more as a surname or title rather than the name of an individual sage or seer. Bharadwaj is regarded as a Vedic sage after whom a lineage of sages and seers of the highest order was established. His disciples assumed their teacher's name as their title, and came to be known as Bharadwajs.

Sage Bharadwaj Baarhasptya is the seer of several hymns of the Rig Veda, Mandal no. 6. He is the son of Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of the Gods. He was the father of Dronacharya of the Mahabharata who has taught Arjun the science of archery.

The epic Ramayana mentions one Bharadwaj who was the disciple of sage Valmiki and lived near the banks of river Ganges in Prayag, the pilgrim city known as Allahabad in modern India. It was at his advice that Lord Ram stayed at Chitrakoot during the first phase of his forest exile.

Sage Bharadwaj is credited with two great works—viz. Bharadwaj Shrauta-Sutras consisting of ten sections, and Bharadwaj Griha-Sutras.

The profound philosophy pertaining to the divine nature of Lord Ram and him being the Tarak Brahm himself personified is preached to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto nos. 2-3.

(29) Sage Valmiki—He is well known for his classical work known as the Ramayana, which is his magnum opus. He is also credited with penning Advhut Ramayan in which Sita had assumed the form of Maha Kali to kill the Ravana with a thousand heads.

Valmiki is said to be the son of sage Pracheta who is said to be the son of Varun, the Water God. He is also said to be one of the Prajaapatis—the ancient patriarchs of this world.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 57-58 he was a Brahmin by birth but became a robber and adopted their means of livelihood because he was brought up by robbers. Once the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-Rishis went through the forest where he lived, and Valmiki accosted them. When asked by the sages why he robbed others, Valmiki replied that he did it to feed his family and other dependants. The sages advised him that they would not share the consequences of sins that he is committing for them. To test the correctness of this advice, Valmiki tied them to a tree and went to his house to ask his kith and kin if they would share any misfortune that might befall upon him. When they replied that they are only concerned with what loot he brings home, Valmiki's eyes of wisdom opened instantaneously. He rushed back to the sages, untied them and fell at their feet seeking forgiveness. He asked them to show him the path by which he can seek redemption and salvation for himself. The sages then advised him to do Japa (repetition) with Lord Ram's holy Name 'RAM'. Valmiki said that he was so sinful that it is not possible for him to utter the Lord's holy Name. At this, the sages thought over the matter and told him to repeat the name in the reverse order—as 'MARA'. When this word MARA is repeated it becomes RAM. This

trick worked fine for Valmiki, and he immediately sat down to do Tapa (severe form of penance) and meditated on the name of the Lord in the reverse order. He became so immobile and lost in contemplation that a mound of anthill formed around his body. It so happened that when the sages returned to the same place during their return journey, they saw him in this condition. They poured consecrated water on him and revived him. It was then that they gave him a new name 'Valmiki', which means 'one who has emerged from an anthill'. This story is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, 6/57-58.

He established a hermitage on the banks of river Tamsa and lived there. Lord Ram went to meet him during his outward journey to the forest, and it was in the sage's hermitage that Sita lived and her two sons Lav and Kush were born when she was sent to exile by Ram during the final days of the Lord's days on earth as a prelude to his winding up his worldly 'Leela' or deeds and ascending to the heaven as Lord Vishnu.

One day Valmiki saw a hunter shoot down a male bird and heard the wailings of his companion, the female bird. He cursed the hunter in a verse that came out of his mouth in a poetic style called the Anushtup Chand (metre). Never before had Valmiki ever composed any verse, so he was astonished at this development. Then Brahma the creator appeared before him and ordered him to compose the epic Ramayan for which the basic story was provided to him by sage Narad.

The genesis of the story of Ramayan is this—Once the celestial sage Narad came to his hermitage (called an Ashram) on the behest of Brahma. Valmiki asked him if there was anyone living in this creation who embodied all the 16 Kalaas (qualities) that the Supreme Being is known to possess. Then Narad told him about Lord Ram. This is how the grand and magnificent story of the Ramayan was revealed.

(30) Sage Veda Vyas— Veda Vyas was the great grandson of sage Vashistha, grandson of sage Shakti, and the son of sage Paraashar and his wife Satyawati, a fisherwoman. Since he had dark complexion, he was also called Krishna, and since he was born on an island, he was called Dvaipayana. Hence his other name was Krishna Dvaipayana.

He is said to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself. The Lord felt that the vast knowledge enshrined in the scriptures were so huge, jumbled up, abstract and complicated that they were beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. Further, till this time, everything was based on memory—hearing and speaking, passing from one generation of disciple to another generation in the oral form. There was a need to sort them out, to codify, systematise and classify this vast ocean of knowledge contained in the Vedas to make them more useful and handy.

So, Vishnu took the form of Veda Vyas to undertake this mammoth, daunting and formidable task. It is believed that Veda Vyas was born at the end of Dwapar Yug during the period of the Mahabharat war.

Soon after his birth, he took permission from his mother Satyawati and went to Badrinath in the Himalayas to do severe penances and austerities (Tapa), and he established his hermitage there. Hence, he was also called 'Badaraayana'.

Veda Vyas gathered all the Mantras of the hitherto undivided Vedas, edited them and grouped them according to the use to which they were put during fire sacrifices. He named them according to the class or section of the priests (called Ritwij) who would use them for their ritualistic practices, such as the fire sacrifices. This added another epithet

to his name—viz. ‘Vyas’, the one who knew the Vedas like the back of his hands and was therefore able to classify and divide them into four distinct texts as they now exist; the one who is the best preacher of the subject and made it easy for dissemination and teaching purposes. He classified the Vedas into four basic texts called the Rik, the Atharva, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas.

The four classes of such expert priests and the relevant Vedas were—(i) ‘Riks’—they were also the senior most priests who presided over the ritual, and were also called Hota. They chanted the hymns of the Rig Veda. (ii) ‘Yajus’—these priests were junior to the Riks and were also called Adhwaryou, and they chanted the verse categorised as the Yajur Veda. (iii) ‘Samans’—these priests were the chanters of the holy hymns in chorus, in a loud, clear and melodious voice. They can be called modern day classical singers who attend any great function or festivity. They were also called Udgata. The Sam Veda was meant for them. (iv) ‘Atarvans’—these priests did the actual, physical offerings of oblations in the fire pit of the fire sacrifice. They were called Brahma because they represented the senior most God, and the hymns used by them were classified and collected under the name of the Atharva Veda. So, as we have seen, the basic function of this classification was to facilitate the performance of the fire sacrifice.

But this exercise did not give peace of mind to Veda Vyas. His soul was yearning for something higher than these futile ritualistic exercises. So, as a next step, he further classified the Vedas into various Sanhitas, the Brahamans, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

The result of this tireless exercise produced a much vaster tome of spiritual, philosophical and metaphysical literature so much so that Veda Vyas thought it necessary and fit to write the basic tenets and maxims of the Vedas into a single volume for quick referral. This was called ‘Vedant Sutra’, literally, the key to the Vedas.

The concept of the Vedas was still indigestible and daunting for the masses. So, he rendered the precepts palatable and within the grasp of the common man by resorting to the time-tested and more acceptable method of the story-telling form by writing the eighteen Purans and the eighteen sub-Prans—a stupendous literary achievement of mammoth proportions.

He had also penned the epic Mahabharat besides these eighteen Purans and eighteen sub-Purans. It is said that Ganesh, the most revered and wise son of Shiva who has the head of an elephant, was the scribe who wrote down the dictation of Mahabharat as Veda Vyas narrated it non-stop, a job which is not a child’s play. It is also believed that inspite of remaining a chaste saint for life, he had begot the three legendary figures of Mahabharat, viz. Dhritraastra, Pandu and Vidur, from the wives of Vichitravirya at the behest of his mother Satyawati. He gave divine sight to Sanjay, the charioteer who narrated the on going famous battle of the Mahabharat to Dhritraastra who was blind. Being a contemporary sage of the Mahabharat period, he knew almost all the persons of this great epic.

During the reign of Kurus, he was revered by both the Kurus as well as their arch rivals, the Pandavas. Both the heroes of the epic Mahabharat war held him in high esteem. When he decided to write the story of Mahabharat—the documentary narration of the epic story of clan-fight and the devastating war that followed it—he chose Lord Ganesh as his scribe; Veda Vyas had dictated while Ganesh had written the epic. It is said that the site where the epic Mahabharat was written is called ‘Vyas Gufa’ (Vyas’ cave)

located near Bharoach while the place where he did his final Tapa is called Vyas Ashram located in the village of Mana two miles from the shrine of Badrinath in the Himalayas. His hermitage during the epic Mahabharat war was located in a village about ten miles north of the city of Ambala in Haryana state. River Saraswati flows nearby. This place is also famous as Vyas Ashram.

Time flew by, but still Veda Vyas did not get peace at heart. Once, while he sat near river Saraswati, full of remorse, unsatisfied and contrite, sage Narad came to him and advised him to write Srimad Bhagwat containing 18000 Slokas. This voluminous work gave him his final peace, so it is said.

His Guru was sage Yagyavalkya. His son was sage Shukdeo, the parrot saint. Veda Vyas chose five chief disciples who were initiated by him in the four Vedas and Purans. They were as follows—(a) He taught Rig Veda to his disciple named Paila; (b) Yajur Veda to his disciple Vaishampaayana; (c) Sam Veda to his disciple Jaimini; (d) Atharva Veda to his disciple Sumanthu; and (e) the Purans to his disciple Ramharshan.

It is believed that sage Veda Vyas still lives, albeit in an invisible, intangible and subtle form in the shape of the vast repertoire of spiritual, philosophical and metaphysical literature that he has created for humankind, something which is not possible for any ordinary human being. These fortify the legend that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and not an ordinary human being, a fact that is extensively covered in Vishnu Puran 3.3.

Summary of His Works :—

Sage Veda Vyas classified the Vedas into four volumes—Rig, Yajur, Sam, and Atharva. Each of the four Vedas had various Sanhitas, Braahmans, Aaranyakas and sub-Vedas.

(a) The *Rig Veda*—The word Veda is derived from the root ‘vid’ meaning ‘to know; to be enlightened; to be aware and learned’. Therefore, the Vedas represent the vast body of esoteric and sacred knowledge concerning eternal spiritual values and metaphysical matters regarding the Absolute Truth and Reality of creation. They were revealed to great sages and seers during their meditation and contemplation sessions. The Vedas are the highest canonical literature in Hinduism. As to the rough date of their revelation, a consensus amongst scholars is that it is roughly the period between 10000 and 1000 B.C.

The Vedas are called ‘Srutis’ because they were orally transmitted and were ‘heard’ from one generation to another. Fundamentally, the Vedas honour the divine forces of Nature which govern all aspects of life in this creation by personifying them as deities or Gods who were offered respect in the form of offerings made during the fire sacrifice which was deemed to be the best and the most sacred form of religious activity since early times. That is why the hymns of the Vedas—which were initially one composite mass of verses—were divided into four divisions according to the convenience and use they were put to by the priests who performed these elaborate fire sacrifices.

Hence, the liturgical hymns used by the priest called the ‘Hota’ to invite the various deities to the sacrifice became the Rig Veda. Those hymns used by the priests called the ‘Adhvaryu’ who was the chief executor of sacrificial rites were brought together as the Yajur Veda. A collection of all the hymns that were musical chants that could be sung and had melodious intonations were grouped under the Sam Veda. These

musical intonations were used during special fire sacrifices called the Soma Yagya where the extract of the Soma plant was used as offerings to the sacred fire. The priests that performed this sacrifice were called 'Udgaatar'. The rest of the hymns, which were like the appendix and addenda, were collated in to the Atharva Veda, and the priests who used them were called the Brahma. They were the senior priests who presided over the whole sacrificial ritual.

It was sage Veda Vyas, known as Krishna Dvaipaayana Vyas, who divided the Vedas into four types, and taught them to his four chief disciples—Paila was taught Rig Veda, Vaishampaayana was taught the Yajur Veda, Jaimini was taught the Sam Veda, and Sumantu was taught the Atharva Veda.

The Vedas are classified into two sections—Mantras and Braahmans. The collection of Mantra is called the Sanhita. The Braahman have two more divisions—viz. the Aranyaka and the Upanishad. The Sanhita is a pure collection of hymns in poetical style of composition while the Braahman is a liturgy in prose format. The Aranyaka may be described as basically symbolical interpretations of the liturgical rites included in the hymns and they are based on meditation and contemplation. The Upanishads are metaphysical discussions and philosophical treatises on the esoteric and mystical meaning of the Vedic hymns, and they deal with the practical problems of life vis-à-vis the different tenets and various doctrines that form the integral part of the Vedic canons.

Taken in their purest form, the Vedas refer to the Sanhitas—the collection of hymns. The Brahmans are considered as appendages. This is probably because the main use of the Vedas in earlier times were fire sacrifices and it was not until later period that emphasis was laid on their utility and importance from the philosophical angle and the practical application to answer the problems of life and the final way to get rid of them.

Since Veda Vyas had four disciples and each of them had their own line of disciples, it is natural that the Sanhitas got edited and readjusted down the line. It is also due to the fact that they were transmitted orally, with no written standard text. So the chances of edition, readjustment, distortion, insertion, interpolation and unilateral changes, minor and major, in the origin body of Vedas was inevitable. The influence of local customs and circumstances over the thousands of years that the Vedas survived also had a great deal of role to play.

The Vedas are said to be not man-made but revealed texts, and therefore called 'A-paurushya'. Their language and terminology is difficult to comprehend, and hence many subsidiary texts called the Up-vedas came into existence. These are called Vedangas or limbs of the Vedas. They are the following—Shiksha (deals with learning the hymns and how to chant them), Vyaakarana (grammar), Chandas (poetical styles of composition), Nirukta (meaning and explanation of Vedic texts), Jyotisha (astrology and astronomy) and Kalpa (formula or aphorisms called the Sutra). The Kalpa has 4 branches—viz. Shrauta, Grihya, Dharma and Shulba. This deals with all sacrificial rites and even those that are done at home by an individual householder.

The Rig Veda is the oldest Veda revealed over a long period of time (10000-4000 B. C.). Hence there is a variety of languages, grammar, ideas and compositions styles noted in this Veda. Two methods are used to divide this Veda. In the first method, the Sanhita is divided into eight Ashtakas, and the latter is divided into Adhyayas, the latter into Vargas, and the latter contains the Mantras. The number of Adhyayas in each Ashtaka, the number of Vargas in each Adhyaye, and the number of Mantras in each

Varga is more or less the same. Therefore, there are total of 8 Ashtakas, 64 Adhyayas, 2024 Vargas, and 10552 Mantras.

The other method is that the entire Sanhita is divided into ten Mandals or sections or divisions or chapters. These Mandals are then divided into Anuvakas, the latter into Shuktas, and these Shuktas into Mantras. The number of Anuvakas is 85, and the Shuktas are 1028. The total number of Mantras are however the same as stated above—i.e. 10552. This latter method is now accepted as the norm.

The Rig Veda originally had twenty-four branches out of which only five exist today. These are Shaakal, Baashkal, Aashwalaayan, Shaakhaayan, and Mandukeya.

The Brahmanas of the Rig Veda are—Aitareya and Kaushitaki.

The Rig Veda had Artha-Veda as its sub-Veda. It deals primarily with economics, politics and other aspects of life.

The Aaranyakas of the Rig Veda are the following Aitareya and Shaankhaayan.

The Rig Veda has ten Upanishads—such as Aitareyaopanishad, Kaushitaki Upanishad etc.

The topics dealt with in the Rig Veda fall roughly into three broad categories. The first deals with worship of personified forces of Nature as deities such as Agni (fire), Varun (water), Indra (the king of Gods and the controlling deity of rains) etc. The second topic deals with philosophy of creation and the real nature of human life. The third topic deals with mundane subjects like marriage, wars, the virtues of generosity and magnanimity etc.

There are said to be a long chain of sages and seers belonging to the Rig Veda tradition, and according to some estimates their number is 800.

Basically, the Rig Veda deities are 33 in number—viz. the 8 Vasus, the 11 Rudras, the 12 Adityas, Indra and Prajapati. [Refer Narayan Upanishad, Verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

The priests who used the hymns of the Rig Veda during fire sacrifices were called 'Hota'.

(b) The *Yajur Veda*—The word 'Yajus' means a liturgy of hymns chanted during the fire sacrifice. The Yajur Veda has been classified into Krishna and Shukla branches. It would be pertinent and interesting to add a brief note here on why the Yajur Veda has come to be known as Krishna and Shukla, meaning 'black' and 'white' respectively. The Yajur Veda Sanhita (a collection of Mantras or hymns) is classified into these two types for a variety of reasons. One of the probable reasons for this Yajur Veda having two names is that the collection in the Sanhita that came to be known as 'Krishna' had a mixture of prose and poetry, and hence considered 'impure and corrupted'. This is because primarily the Vedas were composed in poetry form with the verses structured according to one or the other methods of poetical composition called 'Chandas'. Prose as style of composition came later on and was regarded as an interpolation, interposition or juxtaposition which is all tantamount to corrupting the original method. Hence, that text which had both the poetry and prose was deemed to be 'corrupted and impure form of the Vedic text', and therefore called 'Krishna'—the dark one. On the other hand, the Sanhita which had only poetry was considered un-adulterated and pure form of the Vedic text, and hence called 'Shukla' or the white one, the colour 'white' being the colour of purity, immaculacy, divinity and holiness.

Since the primary use of the hymns of the Vedas in earlier times was for incantatory chanting during religious fire sacrifices, the poetical mode of composition was more suitable than the prose model. That is why these hymns were composed in 'Chandas' which are the different styles in which Sanskrit verses are composed. Later on, when these verses were also being used for purposes other than the fire sacrifices, the prose model evolved and developed. The Upanishads are mainly in the prose model because they are philosophical treatises and not ritualistic incantatory chanting.

Another plausible reason is that the verses of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more difficult to understand than those of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Hence, the former were called 'dark' or Krishna because of the difficulty in their comprehension and explanation as compared to the more easier ones classified as 'white' or Shukla. The Krishna Yajur Veda Sanhita was more prevalent in the south of India while the Shukla was more common in the north of the country.

The third reason is that the original classifier of Vedas was 'Krishna Dvaipaayana Veda Vyas' who taught the text of the Yajur Veda to his disciple called Vaishampaayana. Hence, the original version of the text was named 'Krishna' in order to commemorate this fact.

There is a fourth probable reason as outlined here. The chief exponent of the Yajur Veda is regarded as the ancient sage Yagyavalkya. He was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of elaborate penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so confident of himself, his knowledge and competency that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by 'vomiting' them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriya branch. It is called 'Krishna' after the teacher and 'Taittiriya' after the partridges. Also, since they were 'vomited products' they were regarded as polluted and impure. Such body of knowledge came to be known as 'Krishna'—the impure one.

Now, not to be demoralized so easily and determined to get back his lost knowledge and wisdom, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from a 'bright source' represented by the sun, this set of Mantras was called the 'Shukla Yajur Veda'. [The word 'Shukla' means 'bright or light or illuminated'.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vaaj-sanei, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vaajis' means a horse. The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vaaj-sanei, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vaajis' means a horse. The teaching was done in the form of the cosmic neighing. This form of the Sun God came to be worshipped as 'Hayagriva', the Lord with the neck of a horse. An entire Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is named after this God, and it is called 'Hayagriva Upanishad'. It is the 29th Upanishad of this Veda.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kaanva, Maadhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.] The list of sages and seers who excelled in the Shukla Yajur Veda branch has been given in Brihad-Aaranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 6, and Canto 4, Brahmin 6.

The Yajur Veda is divided into two major types—viz. the Shukla (white) and Krishna (black or dark). The Krishna Yajur Veda has only four branches existing at present out of the earlier eighty-five—Taitirriya, Maitraayani, Katha, and Kapisthal. Its Brahman is known as Taitirriya Brahman. The Shukla Yajur Veda, also known as the Vaajsaneyi Sanhita, originally had seventeen branches, but now only following two branches exist—Kaanva and Maadhyandeen. Its Brahman is known as Shatpath Brahman.

The sub-Veda of the Yajur Veda is known as Dhanur-Veda which deals with the science of archery and warfare.

The Aaranyakas of the Yajur Veda are—Taitirriya (of the Krishna Yajur Veda) and Brihad-aaranyak (of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

There are 19 principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda, and 32 principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda—such as Taitirriya, Swetaasvatar, Katha, Brihdaaranakya, Maitri, Ishavasya Upanishads etc.

The priests who used the hymns of the Yajur Veda during fire sacrifices were called 'Yajus' or 'Adhwaryu'.

(c) The *Sam Veda*—The Sam Veda is basically musical chanting of hymns, and it is basically the hymns of the Rig Veda set to music. All such Mantras of the Rig Veda which were useful for singing purposes by the Udgata priest have been brought together as Sam Veda.

The Sam Veda has only three branches available now out of the total of one thousand that originally existed. These three branches are the following—Kauthum, Jaiminiya, and Raanaayaniya.

The Sam Veda is divided into two parts—Aarcikaa, and Uttaraarchika. The former contains 585 Mantras and the latter 964 Mantras, bringing the total number of Mantras to 1549. Out of these, it is believed that 1474 Mantras are taken from the Rig Veda Sanhita and only 75 are original to the Sam Veda. Then, about 272 Mantras have been repeated twice. If these repetitions are taken into account, then the total number of Mantras becomes $1549 + 272 = 1821$.

Since these hymns are meant to be sung melodiously, they have been set to musical meters and notes. Thus, they have 7 musical scales called the Swars which correspond to the seven meters of classical music. These are Saa, Re, Gaa, Maa, Pa, Dha, Ni.

The sub-Veda of the Sam Veda is known as Gandharva-Veda and it deals with the art and science of classical entertainment which involves music, song, drama, theatre, acting, deception etc.

The Sam Veda has nine Brahmans. Out of them, the Taandya Mahaa Braahman is the largest and the most important. The others are Aarsheya, Devtaa-dhyaaya, Praudha, Shadh-vimansh, Saam-vidhaan, Sam-hito-panishad, Talwakaar, and Vansha.

Only one Aaranyaka is known now, and it is called Jaiminiya or Talwakaar Aaranyaka.

There are 16 Upanishads in the Sam Veda—such as Kena Upanishad, Chandogya Upanishads etc.

The priests who used the hymns of the Sam Veda during fire sacrifices were called ‘Saamans’ or ‘Udgaata’.

(d) *The Atharva Veda*—The Atharva Veda is also known as Brahma Veda since it is assigned to the Brahma priest during the fire sacrifice. The Atharva Veda Sanhita deals with more mundane things of life as compared to the Rig Veda.

The composition style is more sophisticated as compared to the earlier Vedas, and therefore modern scholars conclude that the Atharva Veda is of later period origin.

The Atharva Veda had nine Shakhas (branches) in earlier times, but only two are available now—viz. the Pippalaad and Shaunak.

The Atharva Veda Sanhita is divided into 4 books called the Prapaathakas comprising 20 chapters or Kandas. Each Kanda is divided into hymns or Shuktas, and the latter into individual verses or Mantras. There are a total of 4 Prapaathakas (books), 20 Kandas (chapters), 736 Shuktas (hymns) and 6077 Mantras (verses). The last Kanda, i.e. the 20th is borrowed heavily from the Rig Veda Sanhita.

The sub-Veda of the Atharva Veda is known as Ayurveda, and it deals with medicinal herbs and the science of healing.

Its Brahman is Gopath Brahman.

No Aaranyaka of this Veda has come to light so far, and only one Brahman is known—and it is the Gopath Brahman.

A major part of the Atharva Veda is concerned with the rituals of the fire sacrifice that can alleviate diseases, foster longer life, fulfill one’s desires and aspirations, bring favourable environment for construction of buildings etc., matters such as economy, trade, commerce, agriculture, statecraft, penances, repentance, austerities, black magic rituals such as Tantric and other occult practices. But that does not mean that this Veda is devoid of metaphysical and spiritual philosophy as it contains 31 Upanishads—such as Mundak, Mandukya, Prashna Upanishads etc.

The priests who used the hymns of the Atharva Veda during fire sacrifices were called ‘Atharvans’ or ‘Braahmans’.

The Vedas—The metaphysical relevance and significance of the Vedas have been explained in the Atharva Veda’s Nrisingh Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2; Canto 4, verse no. 9-10, and Canto 5, verse no. 9.

The Sita Upanishad, verse nos. 21-33 of the Atharva Veda tradition narrates how the four Vedas came into existence along their branches and other scriptures associated with them.

The Krishna Yajur Veda’s Suk-rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 3 alludes to the fact that sage Veda Vyas was a classifier of the Vedas and had a thorough knowledge of these sacred texts by saying that he ‘was an embodiment or a personification of the Vedas’.

Sage Veda Vyas also wrote the 18 Purans as follows—Brahm, Padma, Vishnu, Vaayu, Bhaagwat, Naarad, Maarkandey, Agni, Bhavishya, Brahma-vaivarta, Linga, Varaaha, Skanda, Vaaman, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda, Brahmaa-nand Purans.

His *other contributions* to spiritual literature include—Mahaa-bhaarat, Srimad Bhaagwat, Vedant Sutra, Vyas Smriti and Laghu Vyas Sanhita.

(31) Sage Kaagbhusund— He was a great devotee of Lord Ram in the form of a crow. His life is presented in the epic Ramcharit Manas written by the great poet-sage Goswami Tulsidas, in its 7th Kanda (Chapter), from Doha no. 105 to 125.

Earlier in his previous lives he was a human being. He used to stay in Ayodhya, the capital city of Lord Ram and was a great devotee of the Lord. But time became unfavourable for him and due to misfortunes that befell him he went to Ujjain, a famous pilgrim site. There he used to worship Lord Shiva and was given the Lord's Mantra by some Brahmin. Bhusund used to repeat this Mantra of Lord Shiva in a temple. Once, the Guru summoned him and advised that the reward of worshipping Lord Shiva is to have steady and unflinching devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This did not go down well with Bhusund who thought that the Guru is misleading him and causing an insult to Shiva. So, once when his Guru arrived in the temple where Bhusund was meditating upon Shiva with the relevant Mantra, he did not show due respect to the Guru. This audacity and irreverence annoyed Lord Shiva and he cursed him to go to the worst type of hell and be born as a reptile (a serpent). The merciful Guru intervened on behalf of Bhusund and pleaded with Shiva to forgive him. At his intercession, Shiva blessed Bhusund that though he would have to be born as low forms of life to suffer for his misdeed, he would always be wise and enlightened amongst all such life forms; Gyan would always stand him in good stead, and as a result he would be elevated to a higher birth each time he was born again to progress rapidly in the evolutionary hierarchy to finally become a human once again. As a human he would become a Brahmin, the highest stature in this form.

As a result of this incident Bhusund became a serpent, and subsequently had to take birth in many low life forms. Finally he became a Brahmin. He was so much inherently devoted to Lord Ram that even as a child he used to enact incidents from the Lord's life on earth. The learned father's repeated attempts to teach him in the traditional method of education that was in vogue for learned Brahmins failed to enthuse the child Bhusund, and when the parents died he went to the forest as a mendicant. He roamed in the numerous hermitages of sages and seers, seeking knowledge of devotion for the Lord because he was charged with a strong longing to find his Lord Ram. By and by, he came to the hermitage of sage Lomas who used to live on the top of Mt. Meru. The sage, like so many previous sages, attempted to teach metaphysics and philosophy to the young Bhusund, but again the latter had scant attention for such things. While sage Lomas persistently espoused the cause of formless Divinity or the Nirguna Brahm, Bhusund persisted with his quest for the formed or Saguna Divinity in the person of Lord Ram, the form which was very dear and close to his heart. His persistence peeved the sage and he cursed him to be born as a crow, the scavenging bird. Bhusund took this not as a curse but as a blessing of his Lord Ram. The sage too repented at his anger and was very moved by the innocence of Bhusund. He relented and reassured Bhusund that though he would have to become a crow as result of the curse but he would be the wisest bird in creation. The sage gave him the Mantra of Lord Ram. He kept Bhusund in his hermitage for some time and taught him the story of Ram, called the Ramayan. The sage divulged the secret that this divine story was revealed to him by Lord Shiva himself. He also blessed Bhusund that he would live as long as he wished, and death would not affect him; he would die only when he wished. The hermitage where Bhusund would establish himself would be glorified and no ignorance would ever come within one Yojan (roughly

equal to 8 or 16 miles according to different measures) of it. Immediately there was a voice from the heaven which endorsed the sage's blessing and confirmed that Bhusund was indeed a great devotee of the Lord.

Then Bhusund went to Mt. Neel in the northern Himalayan ranges and established his hermitage there. It is here that once Garud, the legendary vehicle of Lord Vishnu, had gone for enlightenment on the advice of none other but Lord Shiva himself when he was overcome with delusions about the true nature of Lord Ram. At that time, Bhusund had already spent seven hundred and twenty Kalpas¹ worshipping and meditating upon Lord Ram. Whenever Lord Ram took birth as a human in each Treta Yug of the celestial cycle of four Yugs, Bhusund would go and visit the Lord to play with the child Ram.

The Brahmins 1-6 of the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition is revealed as a result of sage Bhusund asking Lord Kalagnirudra (one of the divine forms of Lord Shiva) about the secrets of the sacred ash called Bhasma, and about the knowledge that would give Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance to the creature.

[Note—¹1 *Kalpa* is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yug cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.]

(32) Sage Narad— The celestial sage Narad is said to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being's Mana (mind and its thoughts, intentions, hopes, desires and wishes, as well as the heart and its emotions and sentiments). The Supreme Being implements his wishes and expresses his intentions and wishes by making Narad his spokesperson. Purans list uncountable instances when Narad has approached people—both the good and righteous as well as the demonic and unrighteous ones—to tell them the path best suited to them, and the wise ones treated this advise as the Lord's wish while the unwise ones still benefited from it because Narad's intention was always to turn a living being away from his sinful ways and lead him towards the good.

Since he is a personified Mana, he is as fickle, unstable and transient as the Mana—never staying at one place for more than a fleeting moment, always roaming here and there in the entire creation, having nothing to stop his path as he could go anywhere he wished. And the remarkable thing is that he was never unwelcome anywhere—even the demons welcomed him with the same respect as did the Gods.

It is believed that he is born in each Kalpa to carry out the wishes of the Supreme Being. [1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion human years.] He was a Gandharva (a semi-God who is a celestial musician) named Upbarhan in the previous Kalpa. He was physically very charming and an expert musician. Once he showed his amorous intentions towards Urvashi, a celestial dancer, in the presence of Brahma the creator where he was supposed to show exemplary restraint, and this overt show of lust resulted in his being cursed by Brahma that he would become fallen and take birth in the mortal world as a Shudra (a low caste). So, he was born from a maid servant of low caste working as a devoted servant of a learned Brahmin. Under the constant companion of this great Brahmin, Narad developed noble and auspicious virtues in him even though he was

a mere child of five years. He was very modest, devoted, pious, noble hearted and diligent.

Since he had the Lord's genes in him, his inclinations were more inclined towards the Spirit than the worldly charms of material sense objects which he detested from childhood. As luck would have it, once some wondering mendicants came to spend the four-month period of the rainy season in the hermitage of this Brahmin. Narad served them with great devotion. Impressed by his service and having some inner vision of his high spiritual stature and the spark of divinity that was lying hidden in him waiting for an opportune moment to leap up and shine through, they blessed him, taught him meditation and contemplation, besides initiating the child into the path of the Lord.

Thus, the dormant fire of renunciation and spiritual awareness was immediately ignited in Narad's little heart and he wished to take to Sanyas (a renunciate's life marks by constant wandering as a mendicant in search of the supreme bliss and Truth), but he did not wish to hurt his mother's emotions. But the Lord had other plans for him, and soon his wish was fulfilled when his loving mother died of snake bite while milking a cow. Instead of grieving at such a loss in human terms, the child Narad felt happy as if the last fetter was broken and he was liberated from worldly obligations.

He immediately headed north towards the mighty Himalaya Mountains to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to attain access to the Supreme Being. The little one walked on and on, and finally he was so tired and exhausted that when he saw a cool lake he drank water, ate fruits that he found there, and sat under the shadow of a tree and became lost in meditation. Lord Vishnu revealed himself in his four-arm form in his heart, but Narad was so thrilled and excited with this divine vision that he wished to see the Lord in practical terms with his physical eyes rather than the subtle eyes while he was in deep meditation. But as soon as he opened the eyes, the Lord vanished. Most sorry and overwhelmed with this loss, the child began to cry bitterly. Then a cosmic formless reverberating voice said—'Oh son! Your penance is accepted, and I do love you. Though I bless you with an eternal life and that your memory of me would never be erased, but you would not be able to see me with physical eyes in this world. So go back to the world and carry out my divine mandate for me. Become my messenger and go preach the path of my devotion and holy name to this world so that other unfortunate creatures also can get liberation and deliverance from the fetters in which they have bound themselves with no one to show them an easy and practical way out of their predicaments. Go and preach my message to such people in every corner of the earth; go and preach my devotion and let them have faith in my holy name. Your salvation would come naturally and automatically to you as an unasked reward.'

Narad turned back with this divine mandate of the Lord to be carried out just like the great Apostles of Lord Jesus Christ had went, on the Lord's instructions, to spread his message to the people on this earth. Henceforth, he wandered in the entire creation like a mendicant, with an Indian lute upon which he sang the Lord's glories and his divine name, spreading the divine message of the Lord's mercy, compassion, benevolence and love everywhere, attempting to turn everyone towards the Lord and away from this sinful and mortal world so that each individual creature could get his spiritual liberation and deliverance. Such are the ways of great and holy saints that instead of being selfish to seek his own liberation and deliverance from the Lord as the grant of a boon and letting the rest of the world go to hell, Narad chose to sacrifice his own life, liberation and

deliverance at the altar of larger good of creation and to fulfill the wish of the Lord. Of course there is another twist to this tale—the Lord does not select everyone to carry on his own divine agenda, and a soul who the Lord designates for this purpose is indeed the most favoured and lucky one—because the Emperor chooses only those upon whom he has utmost confidence to carry out his personal task. It is just like Jesus choosing his disciples and ordaining them the task of spreading his glorious Gospel of love and salvation.

Therefore, Narad, the apostle of the Supreme Being, is the most loved disciple of the Lord, and it is evidenced by the fact that he is the only saint who has unrestricted access to the abode of the Trinity Gods (Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder of this creation) besides every nook and corner of creation without hindrance and even without seeking any previous permission and appointment from anyone, be it a God or a Demon or anybody else. Narad's visit was always for the host's long term good, so he was always welcome and revered.

When the time came and the age of the physical body ended, he left the mortal coil like a serpent leaves its cuticle and went to heaven to sing the Lord's holy and divine name in the presence of Brahma, the old patriarch of creation. At the end of the Kalpa, at the time of Doomsday, he merged and became one with Brahma, the creator.

When the new cycle of creation came into being, he was born again from the Mana (mind) of Brahma the creator after the Sankadi sages were born. That is why, in the present Kalpa, Narad is called the 'Manas Putra' of Brahma, i.e. the son born out of Brahma's mental powers or his wishes. With this heritage and gene running in his blood, it is natural that he is highly respected and regarded as one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Being personified. It is from the navel of Lord Vishnu that Brahma, the creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine Lotus that emerged from it while he was reclining on the bed made of the coiled body of the legendary serpent named Seshnath who floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar.

Narad preached renunciation of this material world and an extreme sense of faith in and complete devotion for Lord Hari (Narayan, Vishnu, the Supreme Being). But this was against the process of creation, because if everyone followed the path preached by Narad and renounced the material world then the process of propagation of the world and its inhabitant creatures along with its development would come to a naught. So, when Narad preached renunciation and detachment from this material world of sense objects that was mortal, transient and never a giver of peace and happiness to the ten thousand mental sons who were created by Daksha Prajapati (the first male from whom the rest of the human race was born and who was assigned the task by Brahma to propagate creation) in order to propagate this human race, Narad obviously annoyed him. These sons were preached by Narad and they all became mendicants, renouncing their attachment with this life and all charms of the material world along with the desire to enjoy it, gratify their sense organs and remain entangled in affairs of this world. Daksha Prajapati was exasperated and he created another set of ten thousand sons. But when Narad again played spoil-sport, Daksha cursed him that Narad would have to remain on the move always and he would not be able to stay at one place for more than two 'Gharis'. [1 Ghari = 24 minutes. In practice the term means a very short period of time; a

fleeting moment as small as batting an eyelid.] As a result of this curse, Narad became an ever-wandering mendicant. But this suited the divine mandate of the Lord—for now Narad was forced to keep on the move and reach newer corners of the worldly and celestial realm to preach the Lord's message amongst the mortal creatures on earth and the Gods and Spirits in the heaven.

It is believed that Narad is immortal and is symbolic of the stupendous powers of a man's mind. The mind is ever-wandering like Narad, and the subtle message in the entire lore is that one should tame this restless mind and train it to turn away from this mortal engrossing material world and instead turn towards the Lord for finding permanent liberation and deliverance from this world. A wise mind would teach (preach) the aspirant about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, and instead seek ways of finding the Truth that gives eternity and brings to an end the endless litany of miseries and horrors, perplexities and confusions, restlessness and agitations that are invariably associated with un-truth, delusions and ignorance.

Narad was the most erudite and scholarly devotee of the Lord. No other sage or saint could match him in his scholarly acumen and profundity of wisdom (ref. Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 1, verse no. 2). Narad is also credited with the composition of the great Sutra (formula or key) called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra' which defines the eclectic principles and characteristics of the spiritual practice called Bhakti which is to have a profound and exemplary degree of devotion for and surrender to the Supreme Being. Narad himself epitomizes Bhakti at its most refined and developed form.

In Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, sage Narad has taught an assembly of sages the grand philosophy as well as the eclectic tenets of Sanyas, the life of total renunciation, detachment and dispassion, leading to one's spiritual liberation and deliverance.

The Atharva Veda's *Hayagriva Upanishad* has been revealed to sage Narad by Brahma the creator when the sage approached the latter with his quest for Brahm-Vidya, the knowledge of Brahm.

In *Garud Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, the creator Brahma has taught Narad the esoteric knowledge known as the 'Garud Vidya' which describes the secret Mantras pertaining to Garud, the divine mount of Lord Vishnu, as well as the Mantras which can help to counter the evil effects of all types of poisons arising from snake bites.

It was sage Narad who had told Valmiki the story of the Lord Ram which the latter penned down in the form of the epic *Ramayan* by sage Valmiki.

(33) Sage Vishwamitra—The word 'Vishwamitra' literally means a friend of the world. He is the Rishi (the wise and enlightened sage or seer who conceptualized and preached) of the entire 3rd Mandal of the Rig Veda. 501 Richas (hymns) of this Mandal are directly attributed to him, and the rest to his disciples.

Along with sages Vashistha and Valmiki, he is the most famous sage who played a pivotal role in the life of Lord Ram. It was Vishwamitra who had taken Lord Ram and Laxman to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. It was when Lord Ram went with him that he first encountered the demons, and had killed the demoness Tadka and the demon Subhahu while flinging the demon Marich far away into the middle of the ocean. Sage Gautam's wife Ahilya was also liberated by the Lord during this trip

with Vishwamitra. The sage took the Lord and Laxman to the marriage ceremony of Sita where the Lord had broken the sturdy bow of Lord Shiva and married her. All the four brothers were married on the occasion.

There is a famous story in Nadishukta (Rig Veda, 3/33) that he once prayed to rivers Vipaat and Shutudri (the modern rivers Beas and Sutlej of Punjab state of India) to part and give him a way when robbers were pursuing him.

He has been mentioned as a great sage in a number of Vedic literature—e.g. Aitareya Aaranyaka, 2/2/1; Taittiriya Samhita, 2/2/1/2; Kaushitaki Brahman, 15/1; Panchavinsha Brahman, 14/3/12.

In Rig Veda 1/24 there appears a story of Shunashshepa who was saved by sage Vishwamitra when he was about to be sacrificed in a Vedic sacrifice ritual. The sage adopted him as his son.

He is said to be Kshatriya king as mentioned in Nirukta 2/24, and Panchavinsha Brahman 21/12/2. He is believed to have been the son of king Gaadhi of Chandravansha. His earlier name was Vishwarath.

The Valmiki Ramayan describes some very interesting stories related to him in Baal Kand, Cantos 51-65 in which it is narrated that he had created a heaven for his patron king Trishanku, and his conflict with sage Vashistha and his ultimate elevation to the status of a Brahma-rishi, i.e. a sage who has acquired the highest stature which makes him equivalent to the stature of Brahm, the Supreme Being personified.

He is counted amongst the seven great celestial Rishis or sages. The greatest contribution of sage Vishwamitra was his creating the famous Gayatri Mantra dedicated to the Sun God. It is regarded as the greatest Mantra ever conceptualized and preached in the entire pantheon of Mantras.

(34) Sage Atri— Sage Atri is an ancient sage credited with the composition of the 5th Mandal of the Rig Veda Samhita. His name appears in other places in the Rig Veda Samhita also (10/137/4 for instance). His disciples assumed his name as their surname and came to be known as Aatreyas.

Sage Atri is classified as a 'Maharishi' because he was one of the senior and the most exalted sages of his time. He is listed as a member of the Sapta-rishis, the cluster of seven celestial sages. Therefore, according to mythology, he is also a member of the Sapta Rishi Mandal, or the cluster of seven stars known as the Great Bear.

He is said to be one of the ten Manas-putras or mental born sons of the creator Brahma. Therefore, he was one of the Prajapatis or progenitors of mankind also. He is said to have given protection to the Sun God against the demon Svarbhaanu who caused the solar eclipse by composing a 'fourth' hymn against the curse of the eclipse, the other three being the usual liturgy of prayers offered during the eclipse to save the Sun God from this curse. He is said to be chief priest of the five ancient tribes of Vedic period settlers called the Panch-janas. When he was tortured by the demons, he was rescued by the Ashwini-kumars.

Atri's wife was the famous hermitress named Anusuiya (meaning one who has no jealousy against anyone). She was the daughter of Kardama Prajapati and a stellar instance of chastity and virtuousness as a wife and a hermitress. According to mythological accounts, sage Atri and his chaste wife Anusuyia were childless, and having

a desire to have a son they prayed and did severe penance. All the three gods of the Hindu Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder appeared before the couple and requested them to ask for a boon. Upon the couple's request, all the three Gods became their sons. Brahma became the sage known as Chandra representing the Moon God, Vishnu became the wise and enlightened sage Dattatreya, and Shiva became the angry sage Durvasa.

During his forest sojourn, Lord Ram had visited him in the Dandakaaranya forest where the sage preached him the nuances of Dharma (Ramanya by Valmiki, Aranyakand, 117). He was an authority on Dharma (tenets of righteousness, probity and propriety) and has been quoted in the Manusmriti (3/16) and the epic Mahabharata (in its Anushaashan Parva, 65/1).

A separate text called the 'Atreya Dharma Shastra' is attributed to him. It has nine chapters that deal with Daan (charitable donations and gifts), Japa (prayers) and Tapa (austerity and penances). Other texts attributed to him are the 'Atri Smriti' and the 'Atri Samhita'. The latter has roughly 400 verses and deals with the principles of Dharma.

The Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4 was revealed as an answer that sage Yagyavalkya gave to sage Atri when the latter approached the former to enquire about the secrets of the Atma. Incorporated in this answer is the importance of Kashi (Varanasi) as the Avimukta Kshetra—i.e. the place on earth that provides spiritual Mukti to the dying person.

(35) Sabari/Shabari— According to the story of Ramayana, Shabari was a woman belonging to a forest tribe called 'Shabari'. This tribe was classified as Shudras or lower caste, and sustained themselves by collecting and selling honey and fruits from the forest trees. Being of a low caste, she is said have been ostracized by others. She served a sage named Matanga very devotedly. The sage was a realised soul, and so pleased was he with her devotion and service that he blessed her at the time of leaving his body that she would find her emancipation and salvation when Lord Ram visits her while searching for Sita. Like her Guru, Shabari too left her mortal body after having the privilege of meeting and worshipping the Lord in person by lighting the pyre herself with her mystical powers. According to Adhyatma Ramayana of sage Veda Vyas, it was Lord Ram who had performed her last rites himself, a rare privilege that was even denied to his own worldly father Dasrath.

Shabari used to live in the hermitage where earlier sage Matanga lived. This hermitage was near Mount Rishyamook where Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of the king of monkeys Vali, lived with his close confidantes Hanuman, Jamvant, Naal and Neel etc. This place was about ten Yojans or eighty miles from Kishkindha, the capital of the forest kingdom of which Vali was the king.

There is a story about Lake Pampa on the banks of which she lived. The great sage Matang had his hermitage here. Shabari used to get up very early and clean the path around this lake before her Guru went there for his daily bath and other chores. It so happened that one day, the sages and seers who lived in that area saw her cleaning the path leading to the lake very early in the morning. Since she was of a low caste, they cursed and scolded her because they regarded her appearance as defiling the place. This misplaced notion of superiority and high stature immensely displeased the Lord. So as

soon as those haughty and proud sages went and took a dip in that lake, its water turned turbid, polluted and infested by warms and filth. When Sri Ram had gone there during his forest exile, the sages and seers requested him to purify that lake. Sri Ram, being all-knowing, knew the secret behind that pollution, and in order to teach those sages a lesson of their lives, he asked them to request Sabari to take a dip in it. As soon as she did it, the water regained its former pristine purity, and the lake its former exceptional scenic beauty. This made the haughty sages and seers feel ashamed at their ignorance and behaviour.

According to the story of Ramayana, Sri Ram had visited her hermitage and enjoyed the fruits offered by her just like he would have enjoyed them if they were given to him by his mother. In the 'Ram-Sarawali of Surdas', verse no. 11, it is said that 'Sabari was a long time ardent devotee and a humble follower of Raghupati (Sri Ram). He accepted and ate fruits offered by her, preached her on the concept of complete devotion, and then liberated her by giving her residence in his own abode.'

It was Shabari who had advised Sri Ram to go towards the Rishyamook mountain and make friends with Sugriv, the monkey king, who in turn would help the Lord in finding out Sita and freeing her from the clutches of her captors.

(36) Sugriv—Sugriv and Baali/Vaali were two brothers, Baali being the elder sibling. They were the royal rulers of the monkey race and had their capital at Kishkindha. Once, a demon named Dundhubhi came to challenge Baali for a duel. Baali killed him and flung his dead body on the mountain called Rishyamook. Blood of the demon sprayed in all the directions, and this blood defiled a hermitage of a sage who lived on this mountain. So he cursed that if Baali ever came in that place he would die. It was out of this fear that Baali never came near Mt. Rishyamook.

Earlier, the two brothers had very cordial relations. Once a demon named Maayaawi, the son of Maye, came to Kishkindha and challenged Baali. When Baali rushed towards him, the demon fled and hid inside a cave. Baali pursued him inside, but while entering the cave he told his younger brother Sugriv to guard the mouth of the cave and wait for him for at least a fortnight. Sugriv waited for one full month, but Baali did not come back. At the end of this period blood started seeping out of the mouth of the cave. Thinking that the demon has killed his brother and would come out to kill him also, Sugriv covered the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder and fled from there. When he returned to Kishkindha, the courtiers had no choice but to anoint him as the king in place of his brother whom they all thought was killed by the demon.

Meanwhile it so happened that the blood that had seeped out of the cave's mouth was that of the demon who was killed by Baali. When Baali came out, he did not find Sugriv, and to make matters worse he found the mouth of the cave closed by a heavy boulder. When he came back to Kishkindha he found Sugriv on the throne. Naturally of course he went mad with anger, and beat his brother mercilessly. Sugriv, though not at all at fault, tried his best to explain the situation to Baali, but the seed of misunderstanding and animosity was already sown, and seeing no way out, Sugriv fled with his life. Baali usurped the kingdom and the wife of Sugriv forcibly. Sugriv took refuge on Mt. Rishyamook because he knew that Baali would never come to harm here because of the sage's earlier curse.

The story goes that on some previous occasion Baali had collected seven fruits of the coconut tree and kept them on the ground to take bath in the lake known as Pampaa. When he returned he found that a huge python was sitting on these seven fruits. This was tantamount to defiling the fruits and so Baali cursed the serpent that the seven fruits would pierce his body and grow into tall trees. When the mother of the serpent came to know of this curse, she also cursed Baali that anyone who would cut these seven coconut trees with a single arrow would be the one who would also kill him.

Sugriv knew this secret, so he wanted to find out whether it would be possible in real terms for Sri Ram to kill Baali when he asked the Lord to fell the seven tall coconut trees with an arrow. This incident is narrated in the Kishkindha Kanda of the epic Ramayana. So when Sri Ram fell the seven trees with a single arrow, Sugriv knew that the Lord would indeed be able to kill his arch enemy Baali.

With Sri Ram's patronage and support, Sugriv went and challenged his elder brother Baali for a duel. Baali was absolutely stunned, as he had never expected Sugriv to ever have enough courage and strength to challenge him like this. His wife Taaraa also tried to dissuade him by pointing out that Sugriv has the support of Sri Ram who is the Supreme Being incarnate, but Baali was wiser because he decided that either way he was the winner. If he managed to eliminate Sugriv then he would get rid of this constant nuisance of a brother, and if he gets killed at the hands of Sri Ram then also he will be lucky as his emancipation and salvation was absolutely sure. Where, he thought to himself, will he get such an opportunity again in life. In the first bout, Sugriv got bruised and beaten badly. He limped back to Sri Ram and complained bitterly. The Lord replied that he did not shoot Baali because the two brothers looked exactly alike and he could not distinguish between them. There was a hidden message in this statement—the Lord wished to convey to Sugriv that for him all the creatures are alike. But at the same time he had to keep the words he had given to Sugriv that he would eliminate his enemy Baali. So the Lord put a garland around his neck, purportedly to identify him but actually to finally warn Baali that the victory of Sugriv is decided, and if he wants to save himself then he must make a truce. This time around too, Baali beat Sugriv black and blue. The Lord was watching the proceedings from behind a tree. When the situation became worst and Sugriv was about to be knocked down, the Lord shot an arrow that hit Baali and he fell down.

It is said that Sri Ram had to shoot Baali from hiding because the latter had a boon which said that half of the enemy's strength would pass on to Baali if the enemy is within his sight. Nevertheless, Baali felt privileged that the Lord of the world has himself killed him and given his soul the chance of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the gross body of a monkey. At the time of death, Baali put his son Angad in the Lord's custody. This showed that Baali was extremely prudent and wise. By entrusting the conqueror Ram with the safety and security of his son Angad he ensured that Angad would be safe from any kind of evil design of his uncle Sugriv who would now never try to kill him overtly or covertly.

Besides this thing of the Lord giving Sugriv his word to kill his enemy and undo the grave injustice done to him and restore his dignity and right to the kingdom, there was another very important reason why Baali had to be eliminated. On some previous occasion a reciprocal military pact was made between Baali and Ravana that essentially said that they would not allow their respective territories to be used to launch an attack on

the other, and also that they would come to each others aid should either of them is called to do so. The story is that once Baali had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. This story is narrated in *Anand Ramayan*, Saar Kanda (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 96-101.

Since Sri Ram needed to cross the territory of Kishkindha and also take the help of the army of this place to launch an assault on Lanka it was militarily wise and prudent to eliminate the foe in the backyard.

But the Lord knew the constraints under which he had to eliminate Baali though the latter had not offended the Lord in any manner whatsoever. The Lord was well aware of his responsibilities towards Angad and he wished to rectify this apparent biased action of his of killing Baali at the behest of Sugriv—so he ensured that the final right to the kingdom of Kishkindha went to the heir of Baali, instead of the heir of Sugriv, by appointing Angad as the heir-apparent or the prince regent, and declaring that though Sugriv was made the king of Kishkindha upon Baali's death it was Angad who would succeed to the throne after Sugriv instead of any direct descendent of Sugriv such as his own son.

The full story of Baali and Sugriv is narrated in detail in (i) sage Veda Vyas' *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Uttarkand, Canto 3; (ii) *Anand Ramayan*, Saar Kand (Chapter), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse no. 140-152.

(37) Seshnath—Lord Narayan or Vishnu is said to recline on the bedstead of Sheshnath or the legendary serpent of thousand hoods who floats on the calm waters of the Kshirsagar. It is believed that the world (earth) is supported on the hoods of Sheshnath.

Now, let us examine their symbolisms. The word 'Shesh' means 'leftover or remainder', and 'Naath' means the Lord. At the time of conclusion of creation, 'something' remains from which the new creation would come into being. It is this 'cosmic entity' into which the previous creation collapses and dissolves at the time of its conclusion. It is from this 'cosmic entity', the 'remainder' of the last creation, that the first signs of the new creation would emerge. Hence, the Seshnath represents the cosmic entity that remains after the creation ends. He is the 'Lord' (Naath) of what remains of this creation. Since Lord Vishnu is the unquestioned 'Lord and the Supreme Being' of this creation who remains even after everything comes to an end, and it is from him that the next phase of creation emerges, he is depicted in the Purans and in iconography as being reclining on the Seshnath. Sheshnath also represents the sum total of all the souls in their subtle forms which have been leftovers from the previous generation or cycle of creation, hibernating and waiting for the opportune time to remerge as a new creation.

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(38) The Trinity Gods = (a) Brahma the creator, (b) Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and (c) Shiva the concluder.

(a) Brahma the creator— Prajapati Brahma—He is a manifestation of the supreme cosmic transcendental Creator known as Brahm, the Supreme Being. In his role as the creator of the visible creation, this Supreme Being came to be known as Brahma, the creator of the gross world. It is believed that Brahma was born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu, also known as the Viraat Purush, when the latter was reclining on the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshirsagar. Hence, he is known as ‘Naabhij’ or the one who was born from the navel (Naabhi). He is known as ‘Kanja’ (born from the water) because a lotus is born in the water.

Brahma is one of the three deities of the Trinity, the others being Vishnu and Shiva. While Vishnu sustains and protects this creation and Shiva concludes it, it is the duty of Brahma to start the new creation in its next cycle. Thus, Brahma is the seed of all that exists. This significance is reflected in Brahma pronouncing the three essential words at the beginning of creation—viz. ‘Bhu’, ‘Bhuvaha’ and ‘Swaha’ from which came into being the terrestrial world, the subterranean world and the heavens respectively. The knowledge that is required to run this wheel of creation as well as the worlds that were created are represented by the four Vedas that Brahma pronounced—viz. the Rik, the Sam, the Yajur and the Atharva.

There are a number of epithets applied to him and used as synonyms to mean him.

He is called ‘Hiranyagarbha’ meaning the golden cosmic egg from which the creation emerged.

He is known as ‘Prajapati’ which means the Lord who takes care of his subjects, because as the creator of this world he loves it and is responsible for its welfare. Brahma is called ‘Prajapati’ because he is the God who is responsible for the welfare of all the subjects of this vast creation without having any distinction between them. Since Brahma is the creator, he is like the father, and since he has established the laws that are to be followed by the subjects of this creation he is also like the king who decides the laws that form the codes of conduct in his realm.

He is known as ‘Pitaamaha’ meaning the great grandfather of creation. He is called ‘Vidhata’ or ‘Vidhi’ because he determines the destiny of all that exists. He is known as ‘Dhaatar’ because he sustains the world. Since he has created the world according to his own plan, he is called the ‘Vishwakarma’, the architect of the universe.

From the metaphysical perspective, Brahma represents the first Tattwa or the first element in the process of creation—an element that is less subtle than the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm but almost near to it. When the Supreme Being known as the ‘Brahm’ decided to create, he became ‘Brahma’. He is also known as ‘Swayambhu’ meaning self created because he has no one from whom he is born.

Saraswati, the patron goddess of learning, wisdom and speech, is his divine consort. According to the Purans, his consort is also known as Brahmaani, the female aspect of Brahma.

The great sages Marichi, Atri, Angiras etc. are his mental-born sons, while Manu (who is equivalent to the Adam of the Bible) is his grandson.

Brahma is the patriarch of the creation and he has certain characteristic qualities which are exclusive to him and which make him the nearest analogue to Brahm, the Supreme Being who is the Supreme Soul of the cosmos. Brahma has the power to create

and control destiny—and therefore he virtually decides the time of annihilation or death of the world, though the actual task of annihilating or ending this world or causing death is delegated to Lord Shiva, but the mandate to do so comes from the supreme authority, who is not Brahma but Brahm, but the former has been delegated this authority by the latter. Brahma unfolded the world when he turned his head in the four directions and uttered the four basic words Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Maha (symbolising the creation of the earth, the sky, the heavens and the great creation having countless varieties and numbers of creatures, small and big, who would populate it) as well as the Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva) and the profound body of wisdom and knowledge contended in them. (See Mahopanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9 of the Sam Veda tradition). Knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment are the chief characteristic of Brahm represented by the Atma/soul. Brahma also has these characteristic features because he is the one who has not only created the physical world but also the great body of knowledge in the form of the Vedas.

Brahma is depicted as a white-bearded and learned grandfather of creation. This is a symbolic way of saying that he is the oldest and wisest one amongst all those who live. Even Vishnu and Shiva and all the other Gods are much younger to him. Both the two Gods (Vishnu and Shiva) are known to exhibit some elements of Rajoguna and Tamogunas, i.e. they have some sort of worldly characteristics such as showing anger, having passion etc., or assuming different forms as in the case of their various manifestations, but Brahma, the old bearded patriarch, remains one original without any manifestation, much like the supreme Brahm who remains detached from and dispassionate towards the creation, although he is the cause of it, is responsible for it and is the resting place for it.

In iconography, Brahma is depicted as an old sage with four heads or mouths that represent the four Vedas (Rik, Sam, Yajur and Atharva), the four Yugs (eras or epochs—Sata, Treta, Dwapar and Kali), the four main directions (north, east, south and west), the four Varanas (classes of the society—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra), and the four Ashrams (phases of life—Brahmacharya, Grishastya, Vaanprastha and Sanyaas).

His eyes are closed in deep meditation. He has four arms holding different things. These four arms represent the four quarters or quadrants. The arms hold the following things—the rosary known as the Aksha-mala, a brush made of Kush grass known as the Kurcha, a ladle known as the Sruk, a spoon known as the Sruva, a water pot called the Kamandalu, and a book known as the Pustak.

The symbolism of these objects is the following—the rosary represents the factor of time; the water pot represents the cosmic gel from which the creation evolved; the brush, the ladle and the spoon represent the implements that are used for performing the fire sacrifice which in itself stands for the auspicious enterprise undertaken to ensure the welfare of the world; and the book stands for knowledge and skill.

The posture of his arms, called 'Mudra', are two—one is 'Abhaya Mudra' meaning granting fearlessness, and the other is 'Varada Mudra' meaning to grant boons.

He is depicted as either standing on a lotus or sitting on a Hansa or the Swan which stands for wisdom and discrimination.

In a personified form he is said to be represented by the Brahmin class in the Hindu society because this class of people are supposed to be learned and wise. They act

as moral preceptors and advisors to the rest of the society. During fire sacrifices, the head priest is called the Brahma because he guides everyone else during the elaborate rituals.

The *Maho-panishad* of Sam Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8 describes how Brahma came into existence. The sweat drops from the forehead of Viraat Purush formed the water element which coagulated into the primary cosmic gel that glowed with energy. It was called the cosmic egg or Hiranyagarbha. It was from the latter that Brahma emerged atop a lotus.

The *Prashna Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 1 says that the Sun God is the Prajapati because the Sun is responsible for life on earth.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 38 says that Brahma the creator is one of the ten Digpaals or custodians of the ten directions of the celestial globe. He is the patron deity of the zenith and his abode, the Brahma Loka, is situated at a point between the exact north and the north-eastern direction. He is worshipped in that corner. Verse no. 39 says that he holds a lotus.

The *Devi Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 says that Brahma the creator is borne by the Mother Goddess, and is also her manifestation. The 'Mother Goddess' is actually a revelation of the dynamic powers, authority, strength and potentials of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess represents the dynamism of Brahm that is employed by the latter to create, develop, sustain, nourish, control and protect this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. Since Brahma is the God who carries out the function of creation, it is absolutely apt to call him a personification of Mother Goddess, or the revelation of dynamism of Brahm that resulted in the creation of this visible world.

The four words pronounced by Brahma created the four basic components of the cosmos — 'Bhu' represented the earth/terrestrial world, 'Bhuvaha' represented the space between the earth and the heavens or the sky where the solar system is located, 'Swaha' represented the sky beyond the solar system; it means the heavens or the deep recesses of cosmos; inter galactic space, and 'Janaha' represented the creatures that inhabited and populated these three worlds.

How Brahma was created from the auspicious quality called Sata Guna that dominated the initial stages of creation has been described from the metaphysical point of view in the Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 49 as follows— "Prakriti (Nature) in which the dominant Guna or quality is pure Sata¹ is called the 'Maya that is predominantly auspicious²'.

The pure consciousness that is reflected in this Maya (Prakriti or Nature) which is dominated by the Sata Guna is known as 'Aja' or the creator Brahma³. [And this is why Brahma is regarded as being predominantly wise, learned and enlightened about spiritual and metaphysical matters inspite of the fact that he is neck deep in the process of creation, and is enchanted so much by his own creation and its astounding beauty that he remains perpetually enthralled and so completely enamoured by it that he appears, for all practical purposes, to be deeply engrossed in this perishable and finite world inspite of being the creator of the Vedas and their Upanishads that are the epitome of knowledge and wisdom regarding spiritualism.] (49).

[Note--¹Sata is the first of the three quintessential natural qualities that determine the basis nature, temperament and personality of the creature as an individual as well as the entire creation as a resultant composite affect of the characteristics of all the individual

units combined together to present a whole picture. Sata Guna is the quality which is regarded as the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The Sata Guna or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

²*Maya* broadly means delusions creating powers of the Supreme Being. Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that the transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm employs to create delusions. The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted proportionately.

There is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Let us take the instance of the lantern with the coloured glass chimney to visualise how this happens. The colour of the flame as well as the light that the lantern gives would obviously be affected by the colour of the glass chimney. At the same time, the chimney has no light of its own but when the wick is lighted the chimney begins to glow. This coloured chimney is like the veil of Maya surrounding the inner light of consciousness; it is the veil that hides the true colour of the consciousness and gives the latter its own hue. Maya has no effect upon the person who wishes to see the consciousness sans its interference just like the case when one can see the actual colour of the flame when he views it after removing the coloured glass chimney. Not only this, the colour of everything upon which this tainted light of the lantern falls would also be affected. In other words, the creature under the overriding influence of Maya begins to see the world with a tainted vision which is far removed from the truth.

Maya hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time the Maya assumes the glorious attributes of Brahm itself just like the case of the lantern with the coloured glass chimney cited here. So, ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

As we have seen in verse no. 47-48 above, the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama are the colours present in the Prakriti that forms a veil that covers the 'truth', and that is

why Maya prevents one to see and understand the ‘real’ nature and form of this ‘truth’ because of the intervention of these three tainting affects.

Brahma the creator of the visible world is also known as Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic subtle body of the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. This Hiranyagarbha was the first step in the process of evolution of creation because it represented Brahm’s auspicious desire to create; it marked the dominance of Sata Guna because the very desire to create as opposed to destroy is a good quality. When the process moved ahead, elements of grossness silently and imperceptibly crept in gradually, and the Hiranyagarbha transformed into Brahma the creator of the visible world. So while Hiranyagarbha is the finer aspect of the subtle body of Brahm, Brahma is the grosser aspect of the same subtle body at the cosmic level of creation. According to another version, Hiranyagarbha metamorphosed into the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from the latter that first Vishnu and then Brahma emerged. When Brahm woke up to the realities of life created by him, he was known as Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. Since Brahma, the creator of the visible world, is the first auspicious step that the Supreme Being (Brahm) took in this process, he is marked by the predominance of Sata Guna. That is also why the Vedas were pronounced by Brahma himself.]

Life span of Brahma—The Tripadvibhut Maha Naryan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, paragraph no. 8 describes the span of the life of Brahma, the creator. To quote—

“One day-time of Brahma the creator consists of one thousand cycles of creation and destruction, with each cycle consisting of the 4-Yug period¹ according to the Hindu tradition.

One night of Brahm has the same duration as his daytime.

Therefore, the complete ‘day’ of Brahma as we humans understand this term to mean (i.e. one full cycle of day-time + night-time) would be equal to the total time taken for one day-time and one night-time according to Brahma’s measurement.

During this one day of Brahma, the world known as the Satya Loka (the truthful heaven where Brahma and the other senior Gods such as Vishnu live) is created and destroyed once. [That is, one cycle of creation and destruction of heaven would be equal to one thousand such cycles on earth where mortal creatures live.]

With this cosmic scale of measuring time, fifteen such days of Brahma would be his one ‘Paksha’ or fortnight.

Two such fortnights would be Brahma’s one month.

Two such months would be Brahma’s one season.

Three such seasons would be one solstice in the year of Brahma.

Two such solstices (i.e. the summer and the winter solstices) would make up one year of Brahma.

According to this celestial measurement of time, Brahma’s one life consists of one hundred such years.

This is said to be one life-span of Brahma the creator (8).

[Note—¹The four Yugs are the following four eras or phases of one cycle of creation and destruction—the first is the Sat-yug, the second is the Treta-yug, the third is the Dwapar-yug, and the fourth is the current Kali-yug.

The Satayug which was the great Vedic period of fire sacrifices, the Tretayug culminated with the incarnation of Lord Ram, the Dwaparyug ended with Lord Krishna’s

incarnation, and the Kaliyug would end with the great deluge or Doomsday when the entire world would be drowned in water. The next Kalpa would come after that in a cyclic form. This happens because at the fag end of Kaliyug, sins and evils would have reached such a crescendo that the Supreme Being no longer is able to tolerate it though he is most tolerant, magnanimous and forgiving, and decides to finally wind up the whole thing by punishing the world by clean sweeping the slate. Only the righteous and auspicious few survive who would become the progenitors of the next cycle.

The Satayug is also called Krityug because elaborate fire sacrifices were done during this phase. It is equivalent to 4800 divine years of Gods, and 17,28,000 human years.

The Tretayug is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years.

The Dwaparyug is equivalent to 2400 divine years of Gods, and 8,64,000 human years.

The Kaliyug is equivalent to 1200 divine years of Gods, and 4,32,000 human years.]

(39) Vaali/Baali was the brother of Sugriv and the king of Kishkindha, the kingdom of monkeys. See serial no. 36 above which narrates the story of Vaali/Baali and Sugriv together.

(40) Vibhishan—He was the younger brother of Ravana of Lanka, and was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. His life-sketch is described in (i) Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) nos. 9-10; (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan by Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 1-2; Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 1-24; 47-53.

The wife of Vibhishan was named Sarmaa, and she was the daughter of Sailush. Refer: Anand Ramayan (of Valmiki), Saar Kand, Sarga 13, verse no. 66.

When Hanuman had visited Lanka in the search of Sita, he had met Vibhishan first who had directed Hanuman to the place where Sita was seated in the Ashok grove. [Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai Line no. 2 of Doha no. 6 to Chaupai line no. 5 of Doha no. 8.]

Later on when Vibhishan tried to convince his brother Ravana to give Sita back to Ram and avoid the fierce war that would be ruinous for the clan, he was kicked by Ravana. So Vibhishan left Lanka and took refuge with Lord Ram. He was welcomed with open arms by the Lord and accepted warmly. [Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai Line no. 4 of Doha no. 40 to Chaupai line no. 2 of Doha no. 50.]

It was Vibhishan who had finally helped Lord Ram to kill Ravana by telling him the secret of the latter's immortality—the nectar that he held in his navel. Then Lord Ram had shot an arrow that sucked out this nectar which resulted in the death of Ravana. [Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai Line no. 1 of Doha no. 102 to Chaupai line no. 6 of Doha no. 103.]

After the death of Ravana, Vibhishan was made the king of Lanka by Lord Ram. [Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 to line no. 6 of Doha no. 106.]

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

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The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

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